

Kyrgyz Republic



THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

A GENDERED TRANSITION
Soviet Legacies and New Risks

COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

**East and Central Asia Regional Department and
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with national participants drawn from the above stakeholder groups to identify key gender and poverty issues and possible entry points for addressing them. Field visits to various rural and mountainous locations in the country provided additional qualitative information.

The quantitative data are derived from a variety of sources including the annual national statistics produced by the National Statistics Committee on Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic, the Household Budget Survey of 2001, cluster surveys undertaken by UNDP, UNICEF, and UNESCO, and from various World Bank and ADB sources, including sector analyses and relevant project documents. The National Statistics Commission also provided specific data sets on request.

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Abbreviations

ADB	—	Asian Development Bank
CARs	—	Central Asian Republics
CBO	—	Community Based Organization
CDF	—	Comprehensive Development Framework
CEDAW	—	(United Nations) Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGA	—	Country Gender Assessment
CIS	—	Commonwealth of Independent States
DOTS	—	directly observed treatment short-course
ECD	—	early childhood development
FHH	—	female-headed household
fSU	—	former Soviet Union
GDI	—	Gender and Development Index
GDP	—	gross domestic product
GID	—	Gender in Development (Bureau)
HDI	—	Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS	—	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDD	—	iodine deficiency disorder
IFC	—	International Finance Corporation
IOM	—	International Organization for Migration
MDG	—	Millennium Development Goal
MMR	—	maternal mortality rate
NCWFGA	—	National Council on Women, Family and Gender Affairs
NGO	—	nongovernment organization
NPA	—	National Plan of Action (for Gender Equality)
NPRS	—	National Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2003–2005
ODIHR	—	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	—	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PHC	—	primary health care
PLSA	—	Participatory Living Standards Assessment
SME	—	small and medium-sized enterprise
STI	—	sexually transmitted infection
UMB	—	Unified Monthly Benefit
UNDP	—	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	—	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	—	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM	—	United Nations Development Fund for Women
VAW	—	violence against women
WESA	—	Women Entrepreneurs’ Support Association
WHO	—	World Health Organization

Currency Equivalents
(as of 11 November 2005)

Currency Unit	-	Som
1.00	=	\$0.0008319
\$1.00	=	41soms

Note

In this report “\$” refers to US dollars.

Executive Summary

Independence from the former Soviet Union (fSU) in 1991 marked the beginning of a period of transition for the Kyrgyz Republic, as it sought to develop the democratic institutions and civil processes that were consistent with a market-driven economy. Faced with a decline in national income, increasing poverty, and high levels of unemployment, the Government has made significant progress in putting in place the framework and strategies for the broad-based growth that is required for job creation and a reduction in overall poverty levels.

However, the transition has not been without painful consequences, particularly for women. Significant and growing gender disparities in political leadership, employment opportunities, and wage rates have combined to increase the rates of women's income poverty, and the transfer to women of many of the responsibilities of the former state-run system of family and child care support have added to women's daily workload and created increasing levels of time poverty for women, who struggle to balance their paid and unpaid responsibilities. The (re)emergence of traditions and customs, including bride theft and polygamy, are a real concern for the Kyrgyz Republic and the significant levels of violence against women are increasingly understood as a serious health as well as a social issue. Moreover, female poverty and its specific vulnerabilities are increasingly manifesting themselves in the growing numbers of women and girls trafficked each year and the seasonal flow of (illegal) female migrant women to labor in neighboring countries.

Gender and Poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic—Background and Key Issues

This Country Gender Assessment (CGA) explores the gender impacts of these recent developments, highlighting the way in which poverty displays specific gender dimensions. It summarizes these gender dimensions within a framework of decreasing opportunities for women, erosion of women's capabilities, women's increasing (economic and physical) insecurity, and their growing disempowerment.

Decreasing opportunities for women

The transition generated an unprecedented loss of jobs, particularly for women. In 1990, just prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, three quarters of women in the Kyrgyz Republic were in the official labor force, supported by an extensive network of public services, such as day-care centers, kindergartens, extended maternity leave, and access to basic health care. By 2002, the employment rate for women had almost halved. In addition to being more likely than men to be unemployed in all regions of the country and at all educational levels, women also remain unemployed for longer periods. Although the principle of equal wages for equal work is guaranteed by law, the Kyrgyz Republic has yet to achieve wage parity between men and women: women's average wage in 2002 was less than two thirds of the average men's wage. Considerable vertical segregation in the labor market is a key factor: few women occupy senior positions, even in sectors in which they dominate the workforce such as education, health care, and social services.

These constraints have forced many women into informal sector employment, where they work as shuttle traders, street and market vendors, home workers, and paid caregivers. Informal sector employment often involves long hours of work, little pay, and difficult conditions, which in some cases (i.e., street vendors) can pose real risks to personal security. Moreover, the absence of any form of social protection such as sick leave, maternity leave, or pension contributions, leaves informal workers extremely vulnerable to poverty in both the present and in the future.

Decreasing opportunities for women are also evident in the agricultural sector, where women's participation rates have decreased significantly and women head only around one tenth of all farm households. The fact that provisions in the law on land and agrarian reform as well as customs and traditional practices regarding land ownership, transfer, and inheritance discriminate against women is also a considerable concern. With the loss of state-supported child-care and elderly facilities, women in rural areas have also been faced with increasing responsibilities to provide for the care of children and the elderly, usually in addition to income-generating work in the informal sector.

Erosion of women's capabilities

In the education and health care sectors, capability poverty is emerging as a real issue, as many of the gains of recent years are in danger of being seriously eroded. Poor nutrition is one of the most serious health issues in the Kyrgyz Republic and women and children are particularly vulnerable. In 2002, more than 10% of all children aged 1–11 years were underweight, and more girls were underweight than boys overall. Iodine deficiency remains a serious health problem: it is estimated that more than half of all children and adolescents in the republic suffer from diseases related to iodine deficiency. In 2001, 60% of women of reproductive age suffered from anemia. Moreover, maternal mortality rates in the Kyrgyz Republic are among the highest in the region. Steadily rising active tuberculosis rates among women, men, and children are also a real concern.

Like other countries in the region, the Kyrgyz Republic has remained committed to maintaining its basic education system, although serious financial constraints have limited the Government's capacity to provide an adequate level of services and infrastructure. While enrollment rates remain high overall, dropping enrollment rates for girls at the primary school level are a concern; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has noted that gender parity at primary level may not be regained by 2015 unless adequate policies and strategies are implemented to increase their enrollment. Increasing dropout rates for boys at the secondary school level is also a growing problem.

Considerable gender segregation can be seen in courses taken by women and men at tertiary level. Although it is not clear whether women's choices in educational specialization are influenced by the growing segregation of the labor market, changing values/attitudes regarding "appropriate" female professions, or a mixture of both, what is clear is that many women are choosing fields of study such as education (i.e., teaching) for which professional salaries are low and in which they are not fully represented at senior and managerial levels.

Increasing Insecurity

Economic insecurity and vulnerability define the lives of the significant numbers of poor and transient poor in the Kyrgyz Republic, for whom meeting the basic requirements of survival is a day-to-day challenge. Without assets and savings, few of the poor are protected against even the smallest of income shocks, let alone a poor harvest or the illness of a working family member. The scaling back of the extensive system of social protection programs of the fSU has deepened this insecurity: many families are now faced with meeting additional “informal” payments for even basic health care and education services, as well as the loss of many of the social protection transfers which contributed directly to their real incomes. Moreover, the transition period has also seen a weakening of traditional family and kinship networks, which have always provided an important social safety net in times of crisis for the poor and nonpoor alike.

Significant levels of violence against women in its many forms, including sexual harassment in the workplace, assaults, rapes, and domestic violence (physical and emotional), are prevalent in the Kyrgyz Republic. The trafficking of women and girls is a growing problem because poverty and scarcity of employment act as the primary “push” factors.

High inward (i.e., to Bishkek and other major towns) and outward (i.e., to Russia) migration of women for employment has been a growing phenomenon over the last decade and is symptomatic of women’s lack of opportunities for work in the formal labor market and their growing income insecurity. In addition to increasing the stress on the family that has been left behind, women’s engagement in mobile trading or work away from home also presents risks to their own physical security, and many report harassment from employers, border guards, and contractors who facilitate their movements.

Increasing disempowerment

The transition period has been characterized by a significant decrease in political leadership positions for women at all levels: following the 2002 elections, women made up only 6.7% of Deputies in the Kyrgyz Republic’s Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament). Following the 2005 elections, only one woman (or 1.3% of the candidates) has made it to the second round of ballots. The number of women employed in government positions is also very low compared to that for men, particularly at senior levels; more than half of Government Ministries have no women at “top” levels of administration.

Pervasive gender stereotypes and attitudes prevail in the Kyrgyz Republic and contribute to women’s growing sense of disempowerment. Following independence, many of the newly independent states, including the Kyrgyz Republic, failed to address gender inequality in the home, reinforcing the perception of women as mothers and family caretakers, rather than as individuals and independent actors in the public sphere. Such views are at the heart of the significant discrepancies that exist between de jure and de facto equality in the Kyrgyz Republic. Reports have occurred of increasing numbers of *ala kachuu* (bride kidnappings) and a growing incidence of polygamy in the Kyrgyz Republic, although due to the nature of the issue, concrete data are difficult to obtain.

Government Strategies for Addressing Gender and Poverty Issues

In 2003, the Kyrgyz Republic adopted a new Constitution, which provides a sound legal framework to support gender equality and promote women's empowerment. A number of laws have been adopted that relate directly to gender equality and women's empowerment, and real efforts have been made to scrutinize the existing body of law and ensure that it reflects gender equality objectives. The National Council on Women, Family and Gender Affairs (NCWFGA) and its Secretariat have worked hard and achieved a great deal over the last several years, despite limited financial and human resources. In particular, the National Action Plan on Achieving Gender Equality (NPA) sets out an ambitious policy statement for achieving gender equality with specific goals, objectives, and sector targets.

Considerable scope to improve gender mainstreaming at the institutional level remains. However, few ministries or government bodies undertake, or have the capacity to undertake, gender analysis of policies and programs. Efforts also need to be directed toward developing and maintaining capacity for gender analysis and mainstreaming at the *oblast* (province) level.

Gender issues are not mainstreamed within the two key policy frameworks that guide the Government's development strategy: the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS). The NPRS does have a separate chapter on gender issues, which identifies a number of key priorities that require government action. The development of the next NPRS, which is due to begin at the end of 2005/early 2006, provides a timely opportunity to ensure that a gender mainstreaming approach is taken at all levels, including in the participatory process that will inform it, the sector policy and program priorities identified, the allocation of appropriate budgets, and the monitoring indicators and evaluation frameworks against which progress will be measured.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a key priority for the Kyrgyz Republic. With the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Government has undertaken an extensive consultation process to review the MDGs and apply country-level goals and targets. A process of integrating those targets has now commenced, supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), ensuring that these integrated targets are reflected in the next NPRS is crucial. In addition, integrated clear and measurable indicators to measure progress in achieving each of the national targets need to be identified; these should also be consistent with the indicators identified in the forthcoming NPRS.

Addressing the Gender Dimensions of Poverty: General Policy Issues and Recommendations

The following recommendations, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8, are focused at the government level. It must be recognized, however, that considerable support will need to be provided by development partners to enable them to be effectively realized.

Harmonize the gender equality goals and objectives of the principal national policy instruments.

Efforts need to be made to better harmonize the key policy documents (i.e., the CDF, NPRS, NPA) that address gender equity and gender and poverty reduction issues, with a view to ensuring that they are consistent with regard to goals, objectives, and performance indicators.

Ensure that the revised/new Constitution effectively promotes and guarantees gender equality.

The Constitutional Council, which was established by the Parliament following the political events of March 2005, has a critical role to play in the promotion and guaranteeing of gender equality in the current process of reviewing and amending the current constitution. Ensuring that the Council is adequately supported and resourced to achieve this goal should be a key short-term priority and could be facilitated by the NCWFGA.

Actively encourage and support women's increased participation in political processes and governance structures.

Further efforts are needed to reverse the serious decline in the levels of women's participation in political processes and governance structures in the Kyrgyz Republic that has taken place over the transition period. Specific strategies (policies and programs) to remove the current obstacles to women's participation and actively encourage and support their increased participation (as individuals or through NGOs/CBOs) at all levels (e.g., through public information/promotional campaigns, district-level training programs, removal of electoral registration fees) are required.

Mainstream gender in the next NPRS.

The forthcoming review and reformulation of the NPRS offers a special window of opportunity to ensure that it (i) mainstreams gender within each of the sectors identified for action (see recommendation 2 below); and (ii) is consistent with the Gender NPA goals and objectives. In turn, the NPRS revision may afford an opportunity for the Gender NPA to be revisited to ensure that it reflects current gender issues and priorities.

Ensure that gender equality initiatives in the NPRS are properly resourced and financed.

A key difficulty with the current NPRS is that the gender equality initiatives were not properly resourced. Mainstreaming gender throughout the NPRS should therefore also imply apportioning sufficient budget allocations at line ministry level for achieving defined program objectives.

Strengthen the capacity and resources of the National Council for Women and its Secretariat to effectively monitor gender mainstreaming efforts at the national level.

The NCWFGA and its Secretariat need a sufficient level of financial and human resources to enable them to meet their mandate effectively. In particular, further support could focus on developing and supporting their program of work at the oblast (province) and rayon (district) level, with a view to ensuring that the forthcoming NPRS participative process addresses gender issues fully and effectively.

Integrate the MDG targets and develop appropriate indicators that are synergistic with the goals, objectives, and indicators that will be identified in the forthcoming NPRS review process.

The process of integrating each of the MDGs into government policy and programs, including identifying key indicators and appropriate policy- and program-level entry points, is a key priority and should be undertaken under the guidance of the NCWFGA and with the full participation of all ministries, relevant NGOs, and civil society organizations as well as development partners.

Continue support for and participation in the National Gender Consultative Group.

The Gender Consultative Group, which was convened by UNDP several years ago and has met intermittently, provides an opportunity to regularly discuss gender issues and coordinate the development of policy and program interventions. Continued support for and active participation in the Group, particularly as preparations for the next NPRS are beginning, can provide a forum for ensuring that gender issues are effectively mainstreamed in national planning processes.

Continue to improve and ensure the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics and indicators in all sectors.

While the Kyrgyz Republic has initiated a regular Household Budget Survey (HBS) and made considerable efforts to improve the quality and scope of sex-disaggregated data, the existing data do not provide adequate information upon which to develop and implement gender-mainstreamed policies and programs. Continuing to support and strengthen the annual publication *Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic* (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b) is important and should focus on enabling the inclusion of more sex-disaggregated data on the employment, health care, education, and migration sectors.

Undertake a gap analysis of gender-related information requirements and undertake assessments/surveys to meet these gaps.

Significant gender information gaps remain that need to be addressed if the policy directions and programs identified in the NPRS are to be effectively targeted at priority areas of need. Identifying these gaps and undertaking additional studies/surveys focused on addressing these would enable better targeting and hence effectiveness of program interventions.

ADB Gender Strategy for the Kyrgyz Republic

The assessment concludes by suggesting that the potential is considerable for ADB (and other development partners) to contribute to the narrowing of these gender gaps and enable the Government to achieve the goals, objectives, and targets of the NPRS, which fully recognizes women's strategic and practical needs and increases their opportunities and potential to be full and equal partners in the development process. In particular, it proposes some key entry points for gender mainstreaming at the sector level, through which ADB can engage its future lending and technical assistance operations.

Chapter 1* **Gender and Poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic*

A. **Poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic**

The Kyrgyz Republic is a small, land-locked Central Asian country covering some 198,500 square kilometers. It is bordered by Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the southwest, and the People's Republic of China to the south and southeast. The capital, Bishkek, is located close to its northern border. The Kyrgyz Republic became independent in August 1991.

The Kyrgyz Republic is an ethnically diverse nation of more than 5 million people with sizeable populations of Uzbeks (13.8%) and Russians (12.5%) and smaller populations of Dungans (1.1%), Ukrainians (1%) and Uygurs 1%, in addition to ethnic Kyrgyz (64.9%). A vast array of other ethnic groups makes up the remaining 5.7% of the population (1999 census). The predominant religion is Islam (75%), but the government is secular. Twenty per cent of the population is Russian Orthodox. The majority (65%) of the population resides in rural areas. The Kyrgyz Republic is also a young nation demographically: children and adolescents make up 35% of the total population and the mean age was 26.6 years in 2003. Women made up 50.6% of the total population in 2003 (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003a: 10–12).

Since independence, the Kyrgyz Republic has gone through a difficult phase of economic, social, and political transition. One of the poorest states within the former Soviet Union (fSU), the Kyrgyz Republic is categorized as a “low-income country” by the World Bank (World Bank 2002a) and is the second poorest ex-Soviet republic after Tajikistan. In 2003, the United Nations Human Development Index ranked the Kyrgyz Republic 102nd in the world, out of 178 assessed countries.

Although high levels of poverty persist, the Kyrgyz Republic has made and continues to make significant efforts to combat poverty. In particular, the Government has developed a broad-based program to implement structural reforms, and since 1996 the economy has shown a positive response to these stabilization and reform efforts. The Government achieved strong gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 7.0% in 2003 and 7.1% in 2004, which has been important to poverty reduction efforts. The headcount index of absolute poverty declined from 44.4% in 2002 to 40.8% in 2003 and GDP per capita increased from \$381 in 2003 to \$431 in 2004, largely due to improved agricultural production, price stability, and an increase in real wages (World Bank 2004a: 1). Sustaining these achievements, underlined by a continued program of economic reform, particularly in the context of recent political developments, will be a key challenge for the Kyrgyz Republic over the next decade.

Although the incidence of income poverty has declined in recent years, it still remains very high: 40.8% of the population was defined as poor in 2004, of which 9.4% were classified as “very poor” (World Bank 2004b: 4; Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2004c). Closely related to the movements of these indicators has been the erosion of social capital, especially among the rural poor, where traditional social networks have weakened and the social safety net of kinship

obligations is breaking down (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2002). A real concern is that some of the conditions that helped to reduce poverty in recent years (including growth in the agriculture sector and previous higher levels of investment) are no longer sustainable and that broader-based growth that creates employment and provides improved education, health care, and community infrastructure and access will be required if poverty levels are to continue to be reduced in a sustainable manner (ADB 2004: 2). While the official level of unemployment is 3–4%, unemployment is nonetheless a serious problem; household survey data point to a rate of about 20%—and a considerably higher rate for women.

Poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic has a strong regional dimension. The capital city of Bishkek and nearby Chui *oblast* (province) are substantially less poor than the rest of the country, while Naryn and Talas are the poorest oblasts (Table 1). In 2001, seven out of every 10 residents in Talas lived in absolute poverty and of these, four lived in extreme poverty (World Bank 2003: vi).

Table 1. Poverty and Inequality by Oblast

Oblast	Headcount Index (%)	Poverty gap Index (%)	Poverty Severity	Regional Distribution of Poor
Bishkek	31.5	7.4	2.5	8.7
Issyk-Kul	63.0	21.8	9.9	9.5
Jalal-Abad	68.0	18.6	6.5	22.0
Naryn	89.1	37.3	18.9	8.2
Batken	54.5	14.4	5.5	7.7
Osh	66.7	21.6	9.1	29.2
Talas	72.3	24.8	10.6	5.3
Chui	33.1	8.3	3.1	9.2

Source: World Bank 2003: 78.

Although rural poverty has declined in recent years, it continues to be significantly higher than urban poverty. In 2002, two thirds of the Kyrgyz population lived in rural areas and nearly half of these were defined as poor or very poor (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003: 76). Access to public services such as running water, reliable electricity, heating, and public sewerage systems is very limited and rural households have less access than urban households. In 2001, less than 10% of the poorest rural households had access to running water, heating, and public sewerage facilities (World Bank 2003: vii).

The Kyrgyz Republic is also characterized by high levels of “transient” poverty: many households have little capacity (e.g., savings) to resist shocks to their welfare. The risk of absolute poverty increases with household size, ranging from 11.4% for a household of two to 70.7% for a household of six. Furthermore, households with children, particularly school-age children, have a higher incidence of poverty (World Bank 2003: 90). While education levels are only weakly correlated with the incidence of poverty for those with secondary or vocational education, the risk of income poverty is reduced substantially for those with a tertiary education (World Bank 2003: 89).

A review of the nonincome dimensions of poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic, such as equal access to quality education and health care services, also suggests a system under considerable stress. While the Kyrgyz Republic has retained a high level of educational attainment, with enrollments close to 100% at primary level, government expenditures are low and considerable financial support is provided by parents for recurrent expenditures, maintenance, library books, and other teaching materials. These “informal” costs of education, which are estimated to be as high as 50% of total running costs in many schools (UNESCO/UNICEF 2003: 115–116), place a real burden on poor families, in particular, and have been linked to growing nonattendance rates among both boys and girls, particularly in rural areas. Recent assessments of educational outcomes point to declining learning achievements and highlight a poor learning environment, including deteriorating infrastructure, frequent heating and electricity cuts, inadequate sanitary facilities, and lack of running water (see Chapter IV for a fuller assessment).

Increasing out-of-pocket expenses (informal costs) for health care are also a feature of the Kyrgyz health care system, which has suffered from steadily declining government expenditures since 1995, placing significant financial burdens on consumers, with the poor least able to meet these extra costs. Decreasing utilization rates of health care services suggest that many of the poor simply cannot afford available medical services—making them more vulnerable to developing chronic illnesses.¹ Tuberculosis rates remain high, and the Kyrgyz Republic also reports some of the highest infant, under-5, and maternal mortality rates (MMRs) among all the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries² MMRs actually rose from 45.5 per 100,000 in 2000 to 49.3 in 2003 (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003: 20). Of serious concern is the rise in chronic malnutrition (stunting or low height for age) among young children.

The poor themselves have also testified to worsening conditions over the transition period. A participatory poverty assessment undertaken by the World Bank for the 2000/2001 found that the poor in all regions believed that the incidence and depth of poverty had increased substantially over the last 10 years, inequality had increased, and the gap between the rich and poor had grown. Many of the poor noted severe difficulties in paying for the extra informal costs of education and health care, and identified a lack of safe drinking water as a major problem in both rural and urban areas. Reporting a sense of “hopelessness” in relation to their current situation, respondents also identified an increase in problems such as alcoholism, petty and juvenile crime, and domestic violence within their communities. Changes in gender relations were also noted at a number of levels: many more women had become the sole wage earners in the family and far fewer women were active in national and local politics (World Bank 1999: 2–10).

¹ The World Bank has estimated that in 1996–1998 utilization rates decreased from 56.1% to 37.3% in rural areas and from 54.5% to 48.3% in urban areas. These are the most reliable figures currently available (World Bank 2003:113).

² CIS is an association of former Soviet republics that was established in December 1991 by Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus to help ease the dissolution of the Soviet Union and coordinate inter-republican affairs. Other members include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

B. The Gender Dimensions of Poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic

Few analyses of income and nonincome poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic have sought to capture the gender dimensions of the poverty cycle and the differential impacts of the transition period on the lives of men and women. This section summarizes the following gender dimensions of poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic:

- decreasing opportunities for women;
- erosion of women's capabilities;
- increasing insecurity; and
- increasing disempowerment.

Each of these gender dimensions of poverty is discussed in further detail in the following chapters and summarized briefly below.

1. Decreasing Opportunities

a. Loss of Employment and Persistent Unemployment

Data from the National Statistics Commission for 2002 indicates that women are more vulnerable to unemployment than men irrespective of their educational level; more women than men are unemployed in all educational categories, including those with higher education, secondary specialized education, secondary general education, and those without secondary education (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003: 69).³ And while men are more likely to be unemployed for 1–6 months, women are more likely to be unemployed for 6 months or longer (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003: 70). In short, women are more likely than men to be unemployed in all regions of the country and at all educational levels and are more likely to remain unemployed for longer. Women are also consistently more vulnerable than men to losing their jobs. By the end of 2002, 20.6% of unemployed women registered their reason for unemployment as due to being laid off, compared with 15.6% of unemployed men (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003: 69).

The erosion of public services, especially the drastic decline in kindergarten availability, and the relatively high cost of both public and private preschool care, have also placed additional burdens on women with young children, having had to take back their role as unpaid child-care providers, they have withdrawn from the labor market.

³ Specifically, 59.9% of unemployed women had higher education, compared with 40.1% of men; 57.2% of unemployed women had secondary specialized education, compared with 42.8% of men; 51.6% of unemployed women had secondary general education, compared with 48.4% of men; and 58.2% of unemployed women were without complete secondary education compared with 41.8% of men (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 69).

b. Occupational Segregation

As the new market economy has expanded, women have become more concentrated in low-paid public services such as education, medical services, and culture, while men have predominated in better-paid occupations in fields such as industry, transport, and public governance. In addition, women have been largely confined to the lower levels of organizations, even in sectors where they dominate the workforce. Women are also more likely than men to be engaged in “nonstandard” work (i.e., part-time, temporary, home-based) and are less likely than men to have access to productive assets such as credit and property.

c. Unequal Wages

The lower wage levels of women represent one of the greatest gender equity problems for the Kyrgyz Republic. Despite consistently higher levels of education, and although the principle of equal wages for equal work is guaranteed by law, in practice considerable vertical and horizontal segregation persists. In particular, because relatively few women occupy senior positions in sectors such as public administration, education, and health care and social services, the average wage rates of women are lower than those of men. In 2002, women’s average wage was only 64.9% of the average men’s wage, and this represents a decline since 2000, when women earned 67.6% of the average men’s wage (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003: 65).

d. Time Poverty

For women in the Kyrgyz Republic, “time poverty” is a concrete reality. Recent sample surveys of daily time use by men and women aged 12 years and over by both the National Statistics Committee (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003a) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2003) indicate that women undertake significantly higher levels of (unpaid) household labor than men on a daily basis and spend twice as much (unpaid) time on child care. Thus, in real terms, considering their formal and/or informal sector employment responsibilities, they have less free time than men.

2. Eroding Capabilities

a. Worsening Nutrition

Poor nutrition is one of the most serious health issues in the Kyrgyz Republic and women and children are particularly vulnerable. In 2002, 12.4% of all children aged 1–6 suffered from exhaustion and 12.1% of children aged 1–11 were underweight, with more underweight girls overall (13.3% of girls compared with 11.0% of boys). In 2001, 50% of children under 3 suffered from anemia (UNDP 2003: 27).

The incidence of anemia and iodine deficiency diseases (IDDs) has grown significantly in recent years, with particularly serious consequences for women in their reproductive years. In 2001, approximately 60% of women of reproductive age in the Kyrgyz Republic suffered from anemia; anemia affected on average 56.2% of all pregnant women in 2001 (UNDP 2003: 27).

Iodine deficiency is a serious health problem in the Kyrgyz Republic. Programs started in the fSU to ensure the supply of iodized salt were seriously disrupted after independence and it is estimated that 52% of children and adolescents in the north of the republic and 87% in the south suffer from IDD (UNDP 2003: 27).

b. High and Increasing Maternal Mortality Rates

MMRs in the Kyrgyz Republic are among the highest in the region. After a significant decline between 1990 and 2000, from 62.9 deaths per 100,000 births in 1990 to 45.5 in 2000, rates have been gradually increasing in the last several years: in 2003, they had climbed to 49.3 from 45.5 in 2000. In 2002, rural women were three times more likely to die from the complications of pregnancy than urban women—a significant increase over the mid-1990s, when deaths among rural women made up only a little more than half of all maternal deaths (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 20).⁴ Moreover, easy deliveries make up only 40 % of all deliveries overall.

c. Increasing Rates of Tuberculosis

Steadily rising active tuberculosis rates among women, men, and children are a real concern. Although 63.7% of diagnosed cases are men, women's morbidity rates have been increasing more rapidly than those of men in recent years: the number of women diagnosed in 2002 was almost 54% higher than for 1997. For the comparable period, men's rates increased by 35%, from 3,442 cases in 1997 to 4,670 cases in 2002 (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 31).

d. Increasing Risk of HIV/AIDS Transmission and High Sexually Transmitted Infection Rates

According to 2002 official figures, 278 HIV-positive cases were registered in the Kyrgyz Republic, of which 23 were women. Although these figures are relatively low compared to the rest of the region, UNDP has noted that the numbers of newly diagnosed HIV cases are growing rapidly and that the centralized nature of government, combined with relatively low income levels and weak public health system capacity, make countries such as the Kyrgyz Republic potential epidemiological flash points (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003: 5). In 2002, 67.1% of all diagnosed patients with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were women—more than double the figure for men (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 34).

e. Evidence of Decreasing Primary School Enrollment Rates for Girls

Although overall enrollment figures for girls and boys are on par for Grades 5–9, with 92.6% of boys and 93.0% of girls enrolled in 2002, fewer girls than boys (97.8% of boys and 95.8% of girls) were enrolled in Grades 1–4. This downward trend is also reflected in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) gender parity index (GPI),

⁴ In 1990, 69% of all maternal deaths were of women in rural areas; by 1996, that figure had declined to 55% and in 1997 it was 57%. Maternal mortality rates for rural women as a percentage of total mortality rates have been increasing steadily since that time.

which shows a real *decrease* in the ratio of girls' to boys' enrollment levels in primary education over the last 10 years, from parity in 1990 to 0.98 in 1998 and 0.96 in 2001. This decrease is worrying, particularly the relatively sharp decrease from 1998 to 2001; UNESCO estimates that gender parity may not be regained by 2015 unless adequate policies and strategies are implemented to increase girls' enrollment (UNESCO 2004).

f. Significant Gender Segregation at Vocational and Tertiary Level

The level of gender segregation in courses taken by women and men at tertiary level is considerable: young women tend to opt for degrees in teaching, life sciences, and services and men in fields such as agriculture and fisheries, veterinary science, and engineering. It is not clear whether women's choices in educational specialization are influenced by the growing segregation of the labor market, changing values/attitudes regarding "appropriate" female professions, or a mixture of both. What is clear is that many women are choosing fields of study, such as education (i.e., teaching), for which professional salaries are low and where they are not fully represented at managerial levels.

3. Increasing Levels of Insecurity

a. Increasing Economic Vulnerability

Since almost one in two people in the Kyrgyz Republic is defined as poor and more than one in 10 as very poor, poverty and economic vulnerability define the daily lives of many men, women, and children. Few of the poor, including women, are able to resist even the slightest income "shocks" to their welfare; even those households not defined as poor are experiencing increasing rates of transient poverty, because they have few assets or savings to cushion the fallout of loss of employment or even the loss of an elderly member of the family who contributes pension income. Moreover, the breakdown of family and community kinship obligations and the weakening of traditional social networks have weakened the social safety net upon which many poor women and men have long relied.

b. Weak and Inadequate Social Protection

The end of the Soviet Union also meant an end to many of the social protection programs that had been provided by the state, including health care; income support for the disabled, infirm and elderly; guaranteed paid maternity leave; child-care centers; and a generous pension system. A recent assessment by the World Bank (2003) has concluded that within the current program mix, none of the programs helps households mitigate income shocks; and that government efforts are weakly targeted toward those in need, and moreover do not reach half the poor, including 40% of the extreme poor (UNESCO 2004: 159–160). In addition, for many women, the dismantling of these support systems has meant not only a loss of the sizeable social protection transfers that contributed directly to their real incomes, but has also shifted many of the responsibilities of the former state to the household, where they are expected to do the bulk of the work.

Recent reforms of the previous pension system, which recognized and compensated women's reproductive roles and responsibilities, is also likely to have significant negative impacts on women. In particular, tying pension rights more closely to contributions (and thereby not accounting for women's often interrupted work life (especially during their reproductive years) could affect women adversely.

c. Growing Rates of Trafficking and Temporary and Illegal Migration

Trafficking of women and girls is a growing problem. The Kyrgyz Republic is known as a source, transit, and destination country for victims. While accurate figures are difficult to obtain, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has estimated that 4,000 women were trafficked to other countries from the Kyrgyz Republic in 1999, mostly for the purposes of sexual exploitation (US Department of State 2004). Recent studies on the trafficking problem in the Kyrgyz Republic suggest that poverty and scarcity of employment are the primary "push" factors for victims of human trafficking (Winrock International 2004: 7).

High inward (i.e., to Bishkek and other major towns) and outward (i.e., to Russia) migration of women for employment has been a growing phenomenon over the last decade and reflects the lack of opportunities for work in the formal labor market and women's growing income insecurity. More women than men have officially left the country in recent years and national statistical data show a higher female than male inter-*oblast* (province) migration rate for every year from 1996 to 2003 (Winrock International 2004: 7). In addition to increasing the stress on the family that has been left behind, women's engagement in mobile trading or work away from home also presents risks to their own physical security: many report harassment from employers, border guards, and contractors who facilitate their passage.

d. Growing Levels of Violence Against Women

The level of violence against women (VAW) in its many forms, including sexual harassment in the workplace, assaults, rapes, and domestic violence (physical and emotional), is significant. Although the data are insufficient to determine the scope of the problem, due to large numbers of unreported cases, statistical data from women's crisis centers and shelters showed that in the period 1997–2001, 29,300 women and girls sought assistance; more than 50% of these women and girls stated they had experienced violence within the family. Moreover, as many as 10,000 police callouts to family incidents are recorded annually (CEDAW 2002: 57).

4. Increasing Disempowerment

a. Decrease in Political Leadership Positions

Opportunities for women to participate in positions of social and political leadership have declined during the transition period. In particular, the disbanding of the Soviet quota system, which reserved 33% of places in the Council of People's Deputies for women, has resulted in a sharp decrease in representation of women in elected bodies at all levels, even though women constitute 52% of the electorate. In the 2002 elections, out of 105 Deputies elected to the Kyrgyz Republic's Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament), only seven (6.7%) were women, or 10.7% of the 65

women candidates. In contrast, 98 out of a total of 561 men candidates (17.5%) were elected (Central Election Committee 2004, by request). In the 2005 parliamentary elections that followed the political upheavals earlier in 2005, only 38 of the total 397 candidates were women (9.5%); of these, only three made it to the second round of balloting, and two of these were disqualified for election infringements. In the current Parliament, therefore, women constitute only 1.3% of the deputies (Mamytova 2005).

b. Low Numbers of Women at Decision-Making Levels in Government

The number of women employed in government positions is also very low compared with that of men, particularly at senior levels. As of 1 October 2003, women occupied only 21.8% of “top” positions in the Government (i.e., Minister/Deputy Minister); those positions were concentrated in ministries such as Education and Culture, Health, and Labor and Social Protection. No women hold top positions in key ministries such as Finance or Agriculture, the Central Commission on Elections and Conduct of Referenda, or the Administration of the President. Of the 44 listed ministries and agencies, 26 (59%) had no women at “top” levels of administration (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 74–75).

c. Pervasive Gender Stereotypes and Patriarchal Attitudes

Pervasive gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes prevail in the Kyrgyz Republic. Following independence, few of the newly independent states, including the Kyrgyz Republic, sought to address the issue of gender inequality in the home, and continued reinforcing the perception of women as mothers and family caretakers, rather than as individuals and independent actors in the public sphere. Such views are at the heart of the significant current discrepancies between women’s de jure and de facto equality in the Kyrgyz Republic, and contribute to increasing levels of time poverty for women, as they struggle to fulfill socially prescribed domestic roles as well as earn income vital for the support of their families.

d. Bride Kidnapping and Polygamy

Reports exist of increasing numbers of *ala kachuu* (bride kidnappings) and a growing incidence of polygamy in the Kyrgyz Republic, although due to the nature of the issue, concrete data are difficult to obtain. In contrast to the very low official statistics on bride kidnapping, a 2004 survey in an ethnic Kyrgyz village found that of the 543 Kyrgyz respondents, 374 (80%) reported that they had been kidnapped (Kleinbach, Ablezova, and Aiteieva 2004). An increasing incidence of polygamy is also being reported that, in addition to contributing to increased levels of psychosocial stress among affected women, may also have income poverty effects, with first and/or second wives being abandoned by their husbands and left to support dependant children and other family members.

Chapter 2

National Policies and Programs for Poverty Reduction

The development goals and strategies of the Kyrgyz Republic are detailed in two key documents: the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) of the Kyrgyz Republic to 2010 (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2001) and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2003–2005 (NPRS) (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2002). Whereas the CDF, which was prepared in early 2001, outlines a 10-year national development vision framed by some broad national goals, the NPRS presents a detailed strategy for realizing the CDF vision and objectives. Preparations are currently under way for the development of the next NPRS, which is likely to span 2006–2008. In addition, the Government has developed a set of national targets toward achieving the MDGs (UNDP 2003) and, through the National Council on Women, Family and Gender Affairs (NCWFGA) and its Secretariat, a detailed National Plan of Action (NPA) for Achieving Gender Equality 2002–2006 (UNDP 2003). These documents and the extent to which they have focused on gender equality concerns are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Government Responses and International Commitments to Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality

Document	Time Span	Focus on Gender Issues
Comprehensive Development Framework	To 2010	Not mainstreamed throughout document (see Appendix 1) Separate paragraph section (Section 4.2.7) on “Gender Policy” No gender-sensitive indicators identified No resources allocated for gender equality measures outlined
National Poverty Reduction Strategy	2003–2005	Not mainstreamed throughout document (see Appendix 2) Separate section (Section 12) provides good analysis of gender and poverty issues No gender-sensitive indicators identified No resources allocated for gender equality measures outlined
National Plan of Action for Gender Equality	2002–2006	Centerpiece of government (gender) policy Good analysis of gender and poverty issues. Six key objectives identified, along with 72 key “measures” to achieve those objectives Gender-sensitive indicators provided against each of 72 “measures,” but require further refinement No budget attached to any of the 72 measures identified
Millennium Development Goals	To 2015	MDG #3 amended at the national level from “eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education” to “eliminating gender disparity in employment and managerial positions” Gender-sensitive indicators for MDG #3 and other goals in process of being developed with UNIFEM support

MDG = Millennium Development Goal; UNIFEM = United Nations Development Fund for Women.

Source: Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2001, 2002; UNDP 2003.

A. The Comprehensive Development Framework

The principal goal of the CDF, which was produced in 2001, is to reduce poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic by half by 2010. Written with a view to providing a broad policy framework that would guide and inform the development of the more detailed subsequent poverty reduction strategy (see below), the CDF is structured around three principal overarching objectives: developing “effective and transparent state governance,” a “fair society providing human development and protection,” and “sustainable economic growth and development.” Each of these objectives, in turn, comprises a number of specific subobjectives that identify the strategic building blocks for achieving poverty reduction by 2010. Significantly, while both the objectives and subobjectives identify the key policy and program reforms that will be required to achieve the CDF goals, they remain general in nature and are defined more specifically in terms of quantifiable and time-bound targets in the NPRS, which serves as the principal working document for both the Government and development partners in initiating and monitoring poverty reduction efforts.

Informing these objectives, and building on an assessment of the poverty situation in the Kyrgyz Republic, the CDF identifies nine key national priorities: public administrative reform, poverty reduction, development of remote and rural areas and depressed small towns, provision of development (national) security, private sector development, external debt management, promotion of foreign private direct investment, and strengthening the financial system and external trade. In particular, the CDF places considerable emphasis on governance reforms (including state budget management) as the key to effectively achieving both the poverty reduction and debt reduction objectives. Noting that an average annual growth rate of 5% in real terms would be necessary to achieve the outlined goals, the CDF is an ambitious document that acknowledges that this will require both substantial increases in private investment (from 9.2% to 16.8%) and reductions in the budget deficit (from 10.3% to 2.8% of GDP).

1. Gender and the CDF

Gender issues are not mainstreamed in the CDF (see Appendix 2 for a summary assessment). There is, however, a paragraph on the status of women in the assessment section of the CDF on the “Kyrgyz Republic Today” that notes the need to protect the “relatively” high social status of Kyrgyz women, particularly compared with other countries in the region, and highlights the importance of engaging the nongovernment sector in such efforts. Other sections of the assessment chapter of the CDF, such as the assessment of the current status of the health care and education systems and the sections on living standards, employment, and social protection, do not specifically highlight the important gender dimensions of these issues, such as high levels of maternal mortality, anemia, and iodine deficiency; decreasing primary enrollments for girls; and high and persistent levels of female unemployment. Nor are the considerable gender impacts of the loss of social protection measures in the transition period identified.

The following section in the CDF, which identifies the nine key national priorities for achieving the goals and objectives identified, does not specifically address gender issues, although a number of the priorities clearly have specific gender dimensions. In particular, priorities such as the development of rural and remote areas and depressed small towns have clear gender dimensions: poverty levels in rural and remote areas are acute and men’s internal/external

migration has resulted in significant numbers of women heads of households, often eking out a bare subsistence wage on earnings from seasonal agricultural employment and in the informal sector. Health care and education indicators are also poor in these areas, where both quality and affordability issues impact on access.

The most detailed section of the CDF, which focuses on the strategy for achieving the identified goals and objectives, does include a brief section (three paragraphs) on “Gender Policy” which notes the continued need for efforts to promote gender equity policies and programs and undertake gender reviews of legislation, as well as providing support to NGOs. In addition, the section on access to health care does note the need to address high MMRs, although no mention is made of high rates of malnutrition among women and children, particularly anemia and IDD. Declining female primary school enrollments and the need for early childhood development (ECD) programs (including kindergartens) are not considered in the education strategy. Nor do the strategies outlined for addressing key areas, such as social protection and pension systems, specifically address gender issues, even though proposed pension reforms that would tie rates to contributions would have clear gender dimensions. Despite considerable evidence that large and increasing numbers of women are working in the informal and microenterprise sector, and the considerable scope for expanding this involvement to the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector, the strategy identified for development of SMEs does not highlight the considerable obstacles facing women in this sector or include any specific measures aimed at increasing women’s participation rates. Nor are any gender equality indicators identified in Appendix XI of the document, which lists monitoring indicators for each of the CDF’s principal objectives and actions.

B. The National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003–2005

The NPRS is the first phase of implementing the CDF and was approved in 2003 following a consultation process that included representatives from state agencies, NGOs, political parties, public associations and trade unions, local communities, and the media. Women’s groups were not specifically targeted as a separate group in the consultation process but were included within the broader NGO and community consultations that took place. The NPRS was also informed by several detailed World Bank analyses, which provided both assessments of poverty levels and proposals for achieving the CDF’s poverty reduction objectives.

The current NPRS is a detailed document that is structured in conformity with the three overarching national objectives identified in the CDF, with separate chapters on “Formation of an effective state” (CDF Objective 1), “Building a fair society” (CDF Objective 2) and “Promoting sustainable economic growth” (CDF Objective 3). Emphasis is placed throughout the document on “pro-poor economic growth” underlined by improved governance structures, increased levels of direct investment, and commitments to improvements in education and health care in particular. The resources for achieving the objectives set forth in the strategy are outlined in several annexes and a summary list of indicators to track progress—some defined more clearly than others.

An NPRS Secretariat, supported by the World Bank and a number of other development partners, has been established to oversee implementation of the Strategy and make adjustments as appropriate. The Secretariat has made considerable efforts over the last several years to better

define the NPRS's objectives, inputs, and outputs, as well as its monitoring indicators, and it is anticipated that such improvements will be built into the next NPRS. In particular, focus has been directed to expanding and improving upon the participatory process that informed the development of the last NPRS, ensuring better representation of vulnerable groups (including women) and those from remote and rural areas. The Secretariat will remain in place to guide the implementation of future Strategies.

The term of the current NPRS will expire in late 2005 and preparations are underway at present for the development of its successor, which will most likely span the period 2006–2008. This timing provides a window of opportunity for a range of stakeholders, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), to further contribute to the process.

1. Gender and the NPRS

As in the CDF, gender issues are not mainstreamed within the NPRS, but it does have a separate subsection (Section 12) on gender issues that identifies a number of key priorities that require government action. These include:

- addressing gender inequities in the area of employment and social protection;
- improving women's representation at decision-making levels, including within government administration and Parliament;
- addressing growing inequities in the health care and education sectors;
- addressing the growing problem of VAW and trafficking; and
- raising public awareness of gender issues and gender equality legislation.

In particular, the section includes a good analysis of the key obstacles to achieving gender equity, noting among others a strong patriarchal culture and lack of awareness and poor understanding of gender issues; a lack of gender equality at decision-making levels; and unequal pay levels and a lack of institutional capacity to undertake gender analysis and gender mainstreaming (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2002: 46–49). To achieve the identified priorities, the section notes that the National Council and its National Secretariat have developed a National Plan of Action (the NPA).

Taken as a whole, however, the remainder of the NPRS does not take a gender mainstreaming approach to analyzing and diagnosing the various dimensions of poverty neither the economic dimensions—such as income differentials, lack of access to productive inputs such as credit, or gender biases in the labor market—nor the “noneconomic” dimensions—such as lack of political voice and representation and the high levels of time poverty arising from increased and unpaid domestic work (including child care)—is discussed. As a result, gender issues outside the allocated gender chapter appear in a piecemeal and fragmented fashion. Appendix 3 presents a summary of the extent to which gender issues are addressed within each chapter and section of the NPRS and shows that gender issues are treated with some elaboration only in the section specifically dedicated to “gender equality,” with a brief mention of gender issues in only three other areas.

By way of illustration, while the section on pension reform notes that the reformed retirement pension benefits system will take into account the length of service, it does not note the potential gender impacts of the reform on women, whose length of service is often interrupted by periods of leave to give birth or to take care of children. Similarly, the strategy does not consider or address the significant negative impacts on women arising from the removal of the sizeable social protection framework that existed prior to 1991. Moreover, while the section on “The Labor Market and Job Creation” notes high unemployment and inactivity rates arising from the dismantling of many state-owned enterprises and related structural adjustment programs, it does not highlight the gendered impacts of these changes, including an unemployment rate for women that is one and half times higher than that for men; the vertical segregation of the labor market, with women disproportionately represented at lower pay scales; and symptomatically a female wage rate that in 2002 was only 65% that of men’s.

As a result of this lack of a gender mainstreaming approach within the document as a whole, and despite having an Appendix dedicated to the identification of indicators, the NPRS does not include any gender-sensitive indicators against which progress can be measured. The NPA for Achieving Gender Equality, which is referred to in the NPRS, does include such indicators, but no reference is made to the NPA indicators and whether they are applicable to the NPRS document.

The development of the next NPRS is due to commence in late 2005 or early 2006, and is expected to build and improve upon the participatory processes that informed the current NPRS and provide an informed analysis of the (sector) dimensions of poverty, as well as a more detailed assessment of the financing required to implement the identified actions. This forthcoming NPRS will also provide a timely opportunity to ensure that a gender mainstreaming approach is taken with regard to those participatory processes, to the description and analysis of the dimensions of poverty, and to the identification of policy and program priorities and actions and the budgets required to achieve them, as well as NPRS monitoring indicators and evaluation frameworks. This work should be led by the NPRS Secretariat, with some additional technical support from aid providers.

C. The MDGs: National Formulations and Targets

In 2003, the Kyrgyz Republic, with assistance from UNDP, undertook a broad consultation process with governmental bodies, representatives of civil society and international organizations, to identify specific national targets for achievement of each of the eight MDGs, with a view to developing an effective monitoring system to track overall progress. The result is a set of specific quantitative targets for each indicator to the year 2015, in some cases modified to more accurately reflect national conditions. Table 3 presents a summary of the MDGs, highlighting those targets that have been amended from the internationally agreed targets.

Table 3. The Kyrgyz Republic: Millennium Development Goal Targets

MDG	MDG Targets	Formulation for the Kyrgyz Republic
MDG #1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.	Target 1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day (PPP).	Target 1. Halve, between 2001 and 2015, the extreme poverty level.
	Target 2. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.	Target 2. Halve, between 2001 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from undernourishment.
MDG #2. Achieve universal primary education.	Target 3. Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.	Target 3. Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of basic secondary schooling.
MDG #3. Promote gender equality and empower women.	Target 4. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.	Target 4. Eliminate gender disparity in employment and managerial opportunities.
MDG #4. Reduce child mortality.	Target 5. Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-5 mortality rate.	Target 5. Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-5 mortality rate.
MDG #5: Improve maternal Health.	Target 6: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality rate.	Target 6: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality rate.
MDG #6. Combat HIV/ AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.	Target 7. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.	Target 7. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.
	Target 8. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.	Target 8. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
MDG #7. Ensure environmental sustainability.	Target 9. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources.	Target 9. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources.
	Target 10. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.	Target 10. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.
	Target 11. By 2020, have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.	Target 11. Ensure significant improvement of dwelling conditions of the population.

MDG	MDG Targets	Formulation for the Kyrgyz Republic
MDG #8. Develop a global partnership for development.	Target 12. Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, nondiscriminatory trading and financial system. Include a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction, both nationally and internationally.	Target 12. Strengthen international cooperation for the country's capacity development.
	Target 13. Address the special needs of the least developed countries, including tariff and quota-free access for least developed countries' exports, enhanced program of debt relief for HIPCs and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction.	
	Target 14. Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing states.	
	Target 15. Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term.	
	Target 16. In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.	Target 13. Develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.
	Target 17. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries.	
	Target 18. In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.	Target 14. In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.

HIPC = heavily indebted poor country; HIV/AIDS = human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency disease; ODA = overseas development assistance.

Source: UNDP 2003: 8–10.

As the table notes, in addition to amending the targets attached to MDGs #1, #2 and #7, the process agreed to modify MDG #3 (Promote gender equality and empower women) from the

international formulation of “eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education” to a national formulation of “eliminating gender disparity in employment and managerial opportunities.” This was agreed on the basis that while gender parity had almost been achieved in primary and secondary education, considerable disparities and inequalities existed within the employment sector.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and UNDP are currently collaborating with the NCWFGA Secretariat on a project to develop appropriate indicators for MDG #3 (as amended to reflect national priorities) and to identify gender-sensitive indicators for the remaining MDGs. It is foreseen that these indicators will then serve as common indicators for the monitoring of the United Nations Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the MDGs, and the Beijing Platform for Action.

As part of the above process, UNDP has also made a preliminary assessment of the likelihood of each of the targets being reached by 2015 (Table 4). While noting that MDG #1 may “potentially” be achieved, the review notes that a number of key actions will be required, including a greater focus on pro-poor economic growth conditions (e.g., stimulation of employment, increasing access to financial resources for SME development); and reforms of government fiscal policy, including development of a more equitable taxation system, and improved targeting of social protection measures. Given the scope of these required actions, a “potential” rating could be understood to be cautiously optimistic. In relation to gender issues, the real concern is that MDG #2 may not be met if the female primary school enrollment rate continues to decline. Considerable efforts will also be required to ensure that the national target (Target 4, eliminating gender disparity in employment and managerial opportunities) for MDG #3 (Gender Equality) will be met and will require (as this CGA notes in Chapter 4) a greater focus on the gender dimensions of proposed economic reforms, particularly in the rural sector. Potential achievement of MDGs #4 and #5 for the Kyrgyz Republic will also depend on significant investments in the health care sector, affecting both access to and quality of services. For both of these goals, measuring the achievement of targets is complicated by the use of varying indicators (see Chapter 5), particularly for MMRs, which are higher when World Health Organization (WHO) methodology is used.

Table 4. Achieving the National Millennium Development Goals Targets: a Preliminary Assessment from the United Nations Development Programme

Will The Targets Be Reached?	Probably	Potentially	Unlikely	Insufficient Data
Goal 1 – Eradication of Extreme Poverty		X		
Goal 2 – Education	X			
Goal 3 – Gender Equality		X		
Goal 4 – Reduction of Child Mortality				X
Goal 5 – Improvement of Maternal Health		X		
Goal 6 - Combating HIV/AIDS and other Diseases		X		
Goal 7 – Environmental Sustainability		X		
Goal 8 – Global Partnership for Development		X		

HIV/AIDS = human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

Source: UNDP 2003.

In addition, as part of the above process, UNDP assessed the state of the supportive environment—for example, whether appropriate policy frameworks are in place and if the required financial and human resources are available. UNDP concluded that the state of the supportive environment was “fair” for all of the national targets, with the exception of the environment, where the supportive environment was rated as “weak but improving.” The assessment of the Government’s capacity for monitoring and reporting on MDG progress was also “fair” overall, although the quantity and regularity of survey information was assessed as weak with regard to MDG #6, “Combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases,” and MDG #8, “Global partnership for Development,” and the quality of survey information was regarded as weak for MDG #4, “Reduction of Child Mortality,” as well as MDG #6. Considerably more work therefore needs to be done to improve the monitoring framework so that progress can be effectively tracked and gaps identified.

Chapter 3 National Laws, Institutions and Policies Promoting Gender Equality

A. International Commitments

The Kyrgyz Republic is party to a number of international treaties that promote gender equality. These include CEDAW and its Optional Protocol, which it ratified in 2002; the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and its Additional Protocol; and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which were ratified in 1994. The Kyrgyz Republic also adopted the Beijing Platform for Action as a framework for developing its national commitments and programs.

In 2000, the Kyrgyz Republic submitted its first report on the implementation of the CEDAW Convention to the CEDAW Committee. The second periodic report was presented to the Committee in January 2004. The Kyrgyz Republic has also committed itself to the achievement of the MDGs and in 2003 undertook a broad consultation process to identify specific national targets for achievement of each of the eight MDG targets, with a view to developing an effective monitoring system to track overall progress. The result is a set of specific quantitative targets for each indicator to the year 2015, in some cases modified to more accurately reflect national conditions (see Table 3) (UNDP 2003). For a more detailed discussion of these national targets and related monitoring indicators, see Chapter 2-C above.

B. Constitution and Legal Framework

In 2003, the Kyrgyz Republic adopted a revised Constitution,⁵ which provides a legal framework to support gender equality and promote women's empowerment (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003a). The Constitution provides that "All persons in the Kyrgyz Republic shall be equal before the law and the court" and that "No one may be subjected to any discrimination, [and] rights and freedoms of persons shall not be abridged on account of origin, gender, race, nationality, language, creed, political and religious convictions, or on any other account of personal or public nature" (Article 15[3]). Notably, however, the current Constitution does not define discrimination (as well as other terms used in the document) or the mechanisms for its nonadmissibility, thereby making such provisions largely declarative in character.

The Kyrgyz Republic has also adopted a number of laws that directly relate to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. The law "On Basics of State Guarantees for Ensuring Gender Equity" grants equal rights and opportunities for all, irrespective of gender, in social, political, economic, cultural, and other areas of human activity. The law also stipulates state guarantees of gender equality in governance structures and introduces a maximum "gender" quota of 70% (i.e., no more than 70% of positions should be taken by either men or women) for a number

⁵ The Constitution of 2003 includes amendments and revisions to the 1993 Constitution.

of state positions, including the judges of the Constitutional and Supreme Courts, the Central Commission on Elections and Referendums, and the Auditors of the Chamber of Accounts (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2004a: 10). However, no mechanisms are in place to enforce this law and to date the stipulated quotas have not been filled.

The Bill on Social and Legal Protection against Family Violence (2003), which was submitted as a public initiative and coordinated by several NGOs, introduced for the first time a range of protective orders to provide legal protection to persons suffering from family violence. Further amendments, additions, and operational aspects of the law are still being developed.

The New Family Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, which was also adopted in 2003, is based upon the principle of gender equality within the family and notably defines housekeeping as “an independent type of labor activity meant to meet a family’s needs” stipulating that “both spouses shall fulfill equal duties with respect to housekeeping” (paragraph 4, Article 32). The Code also legalizes the process of according the property of spouses on a contractual basis and includes procedures for the drawing up of a marriage contract (Article 44), its content (Article 45), making changes (Article 46), and its annulment (Article 47) (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2004a: 13). Although progressive in character, the Code is, in practice, rarely applied, since most Kyrgyz marriages take place in accordance with local customs and traditions.

Although the Labor Code of the Kyrgyz Republic does specify equal pay for equal work, in practice considerable vertical and horizontal occupational segregation persists and wage gaps are significant (see Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of gender and labor-market issues). Sexual harassment is not explicitly covered under the laws of the Kyrgyz Republic, although it is widely (but informally) reported.

Along with the Russian Federation, the Kyrgyz Republic was one of the first countries in the fSU to begin a gender analysis of its laws. The outcome has been a “Gender Expertise Manual of the Legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic” (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2004b). In addition to providing guidance to policy makers on ensuring the gender sensitivity of legislation, the Manual reviews aspects of the Republic’s legislative framework and codes identifying constraints and obstacles to the promotion of gender equality. However, although eight laws have been fully reviewed and 84 recommendations made, only one amendment (on retaining female juveniles in separate custodial arrangements) has been adopted to date (Kyrgyz Council of NGOs, 2003: 9).

While the significant body of legislation that has been put in place in the Kyrgyz Republic to promote gender equality is commendable, the fact that few women have used existing laws to challenge acts of discrimination has caused some concern. Furthermore, no record exists of any court decision in which women have obtained redress for such acts. The judiciary, law enforcement personnel, and women in general are not familiar with existing laws to promote gender equality, including the law on social and legal protection against violence in the family, or the procedures for their application and enforcement.

Since the 2005 elections, a constitutional committee (known as the Constitutional Council) has been established to review and draft a revised Constitution. The establishment of the Council, which includes representatives from the Government, judiciary, and civil society (including NGOs, academics, and political leaders), provides a strategic opportunity to ensure that previous recommendations on improving gender equality are considered and addressed and to ensure that legislative gaps (including for example defining key terms such as “discrimination” and ensuring that enforcement mechanisms support nondiscriminatory clauses) are overcome. Providing gender awareness training and technical support to the committee is also required so that these goals are effectively realized.

C. Institutions and Policies to Promote Gender Equality

1. National Council on Women, Family and Gender Affairs and its Secretariat

In 2001, the NCWFGA was established by Presidential Decree and under the direct supervision of the President’s Office. The Council replaced the National Council on Gender Policy, which had been established in 1998 and located within the President’s Office, and the State Commission on Family, Women and Youth Affairs, which had been established in 1996 as a government entity.

The NCWFGA is tasked with coordinating action to implement a national policy and strategy to achieve gender equality; monitoring the observance of the Kyrgyz Republic’s international obligations in the area of gender development, including CEDAW; and the preparation of national reports in accordance with those requirements. Its other tasks include the integration of gender perspectives into national policy and strategies, gender analysis of statutory and normative documents, and coordination of the targeted use of budgetary financial resources and foreign investments to implement the state’s gender strategy.

The working body of the Council is the Secretariat, which is a structural subdivision of the President’s Office. The Secretariat implements decisions of the NCWFGA and coordinates and monitors the execution of state gender policy and the current NPA on Achieving Gender Equality (2002–2006) (discussed in the following section). The Secretariat consists of four people, including three expert positions and one chief of staff, the Secretary. Since 2001, the Secretariat has had three Heads.

Allocation of funding for programs implemented by the Secretariat, specifically those programs identified in the NPA (see below) amounted to only 300,000 soms (\$US7,320) in 2002, 400,000 soms in 2003 (US\$9,760) and 500,000 soms in 2004 (\$12,200). The Secretariat advises that in 2005, 1,011,200 soms are to be allocated, and although this increase is to be welcomed, it will not be sufficient to meet even a modest number of the activities outlined in the NPA (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2004a: 51). Funding of the program, therefore, remains a key constraint in implementing and achieving gender equality goals and objectives.

Despite these limited (human and financial) resources, the Secretariat has achieved a great deal since its establishment. In particular, it has worked hard to draw attention to the need for gender reviews of existing and pending legislation and has, with support from UNDP, produced a “Gender Expertise Manual of the Legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic” (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2004b). In addition to reviewing the existing framework and making recommendations and proposals for legislative amendments, the manual provides a guide for legislators and politicians in drafting and enforcing gender-sensitive legislation.

The Secretariat’s work is guided by the NPA (see next section), which specifies the goals, objectives, and tasks for individual ministries and their committees. However, inadequate financing of the Secretariat and the NPA, lack of continuity in its staffing, and a formidable workload limit its capacity to monitor and lobby responsible ministries to meet their NPA goals. Moreover, those ministries need to develop an improved understanding of the rationale for and benefits of gender mainstreaming in order to effectively fulfill their NPA responsibilities.

The Secretariat has, over the last several years, worked to establish a system of Focal Points in each Ministry, including the Prime Minister’s Office, and at regional level. This Focal Point network has been instrumental in disseminating information on the NPA and associated gender policy issues within the Government, providing in-house expertise and support, and advising the Secretariat on key issues of concern. Further strengthening of this network is required, however—both by providing more regular general and sector-specific training to increase their competence in gender analysis and by providing the analytical tools necessary to make their ministry’s/department’s/division’s policy and planning processes and program implementation gender-sensitive. Clearly written terms of reference would also help to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Focal Points and enable the development and implementation of appropriate training programs. Ensuring that senior staff are appointed to Focal Point positions would also enhance effectiveness and impact.

In response to recommendations made by CEDAW after consideration of the second periodic report of the Kyrgyz Republic (CEDAW 2004), a Government Resolution was passed requiring responsible areas to respond to the CEDAW concluding comments. In particular, some in the Secretariat recognize that further efforts are required to introduce education and training programs on existing laws to promote gender equality, in particular for the judiciary, law enforcement personnel, and parliamentarians; a number of training programs have already been undertaken. This requires further support. In addition, awareness-raising campaigns targeted at women need to be undertaken to teach them about their rights and to ensure that women can avail themselves of procedures and remedies for violations of their rights under the existing laws. Finally, the issue of providing adequate, accessible, and affordable enforcement procedures and legal remedies for violation of women’s human rights requires further consideration.

2. The National Plan of Action for Achieving Gender Equality (2002–2006)

The overall goal of the NPA for Achieving Gender Equality for 2002–2006 is to secure the full and equal participation of women in political, economic, social, and cultural life. The NPA is the successor of the *Ayalzat*, the national program for the advancement of women, which was implemented from 1996 to 2000.

A 2001 evaluation of the results of the *Ayalzat* program showed that while significant advances had been made in developing appropriate institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women (including, for example, a gender Focal Point structure) and improving national legislation in the area of women's rights, more systematic efforts were required to address key issues such as the poor level of women's representation at all decision-making levels, including Parliament; declining standards of and access to education and health care services, especially for rural women; growing levels of violence against women (VAW) (including bride kidnapping); the growing numbers of trafficked women and girls; and the high rates of poverty and unemployment among women. In addition, insufficient funding of the *Ayalzat* program (only 30% of the required amount was funded) and a lack of understanding of gender mainstreaming approaches and their relevance to national poverty reduction programs within the Government at both central and regional levels were identified as major constraints to the effective achievement of *Ayalzat* goals and objectives.

In response, the NPA seeks to present a detailed strategy for improving the status of women and identifies the following strategic objectives as the framework for action:

- strengthening national mechanisms for gender equality;
- improving the gender balance at all decision-making levels;
- ensuring that gender issues are effectively addressed within labor, employment, and social protection programs;
- increasing women's and girls' access to quality health care services;
- establishing gender parity in education and culture; and
- preventing and reducing VAW.

Key strengths of the NPA include its stated objective of mainstreaming gender in all policies, plans, and programs and their reporting processes; and the directive that all NPA executors (including ministries and agencies, oblast, rayon, city administrations and *ayil akmotu* [villages or communes]) are responsible for the implementation of NPA goals and objectives and are required to provide biannual reports to the NCWFGA Secretariat. While gender mainstreaming in policies, plans, programs, and reporting processes has not yet taken place, the Secretariat does seek to obtain biannual reports on the implementation of NPA goals and objectives. The reports, while not providing real details on constraints and obstacles, are a positive step forward and need to be further supported through the development of appropriate sex-disaggregated data. Furthermore, the narrative plan is accompanied by a "Matrix of Measures" that provides considerable detail on the specific measures required to achieve the six NPA objectives (72 measures are identified in all), basic indicators for monitoring progress and achievements, and identification of the principal executors (by organization) and development partners as appropriate.

The NPA provides an ambitious policy statement with specific goals and objectives, including sector targets and a structured approach to identifying and resolving gender issues at the national level. The NPA has Presidential endorsement. However, given the large scope of many of the 72 measures, large numbers of which require significant policy and program adjustments as well as changes in organizational culture and practices, there remains scope to prioritize the actions and identify the interrelationships between them. Broader objectives, such as implementing government-wide gender mainstreaming, while critical, could be further refined through the use of stakeholder analysis, for example, to assess strategic points of entry for gender mainstreaming where success is most likely to be achieved.

Specification of the resources required for each of the identified 72 measures to achieve the six NPA objectives and a strategy for the mobilization of those resources—human, technical and budgetary—are also needed. In addition to the resources required by the various executing ministries, agencies, and oblast, rayon, and city administrations, this should include the resources required by the Secretariat for regular monitoring of the Plan’s implementation. Furthermore, while the matrix significantly includes a column on “basic indicators for monitoring,” more specificity within these indicators is required to make measurement of achievements meaningful. Clearer timeframes with concrete target dates over the NPA’s timeframe would also permit better tracking of implementation progress.⁶

A key challenge for most national women’s machineries, including those in the Kyrgyz Republic, is the development of an effective (gender) management information system to coordinate information flows, collate and synthesize results, and provide the necessary information to enable appropriate (and synergistic) policy and program interventions to be made. Considerable but disparate gender-related information exists within the various administrative levels of the Kyrgyz Government and an effective system and mechanism for managing and validating such information has yet to be developed. Nor has a system for managing and disseminating the information being generated through the activities of the NPA been developed. The development of such a system in the Kyrgyz Republic is critical not only to properly informing the national policy and program development process but to ensuring the existence of a complementarity to and synergy between the gender strategies and actions identified in the various national development planning instruments such as the Kyrgyz Government’s CDF (which spans 10 years), the NPRS, and the NPA, as well as the Republic’s various international commitments and obligations.

⁶ For example, terms such as “Number of specialists in different state structures responsible for realization of gender policy” or “number of training seminars held” lack numeric specificity, making measurement of progress (for example against set targets) difficult. Of the 72 measures identified, 42 identify “regularly” as the timeframe for implementation. See Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (2002b).

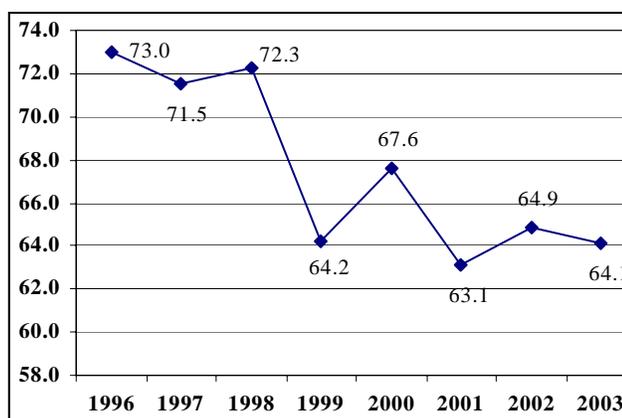
A. Gender Dimensions of the Formal Labor Market

In 1990, just prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 83% of women in the Kyrgyz Republic were in the official labor force, supported by an extensive network of public services, such as day-care centers, kindergartens, extended maternity leave, and access to basic health care. By 2002, the employment rate for women had declined to 47.4%. Women had been hit hard by the large-scale retrenchments that took place during the economic decline of the early years of transition and subsequently (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 53).

In particular, the abolition of the well-established system of state-provided child care that characterized the Soviet period led to the closure of almost two thirds of the country's kindergartens and removed the crucial child care support that enabled many economically active women to work outside the home. In rural areas today, childcare is almost nonexistent and although a very limited numbers of kindergartens operate in urban areas, most are well beyond the financial reach of the average Kyrgyz family. With GDP per capita levels about \$300 in 2001 (World Bank 2003: iii) and kindergartens costing around 500 soms (\$12) per month for a public kindergarten and 2,500–5,000 soms (\$60–\$120) per month for a private kindergarten, child care has become a luxury that few families can afford.⁷ Moreover, many of the additional social support services that were provided by the fSU, such as nursing, health care, and pensioner care, have also disappeared, placing increasing pressure on women to fill these roles. In addition to working between 4.5 and 5 hours per day on unpaid household work (compared with 1 1/4 hours for men), women have clearly borne the major brunt of the cuts to the welfare and state supports that have marked the transition to a market economy (UNDP 2004a).

The Kyrgyz Republic has yet to achieve wage parity between men and women (Figures 1 and 2). Although the principle of equal wages for equal work is guaranteed by law, in practice considerable vertical and horizontal segregation persists. In particular, the fact that relatively few women occupy senior positions in sectors such as public administration, education, and health care

**Figure 1: Ratio of Female Wage to
Male Wage, 1996–2002 (%)**



Source: National Statistical Committee (data provided on request).

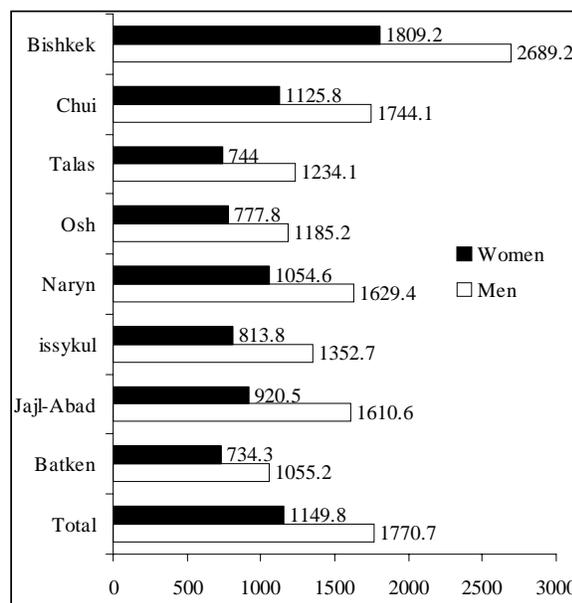
⁷ Reported by women in interviews/discussions undertaken during the Country Gender Assessment field work, November 2004.

and social services means that women's overall average wage rates are lower than those of men. In 2002, women's average wage was only 64.9% of the average men's wage, and this represents a decline since 2000, when women earned 67.6% of the average men's wage (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 65).

Higher men's average wages than women's are also consistent across all regions, as Figure 2 shows.

The employment market is also considerably bunched: women are employed predominantly in sectors such as education and health care and, at a declining but still significant level, in agriculture. Despite their prevalence in these sectors, however, the wage differentials noted above remain significant, with women consistently earning less than their men counterparts. In the education sector, for example, women make up 73.9% of all employees, but their average wage is only 77.9% that of men's; in the health care and social services sector, women make up 74.5% of all employees but still earn only 83.2% of the average men's wage. In comparison, men dominate in mining, construction, and public administration, where they make up 91.4%, 93.1% and 75.4% of the total workforce, respectively.

Figure 2. Average Wage (SOM) of Women and Men by Region, 2002



Source: Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 66.

Official data on registered unemployment rates needs to be considered with caution and do not provide a complete picture of real trends and how they may be impacting upon women in particular. Low levels of unemployment benefits combined with very strict eligibility conditions provide weak incentives for both women and men to register, with the result that the population of discouraged individuals among the jobless is large and growing. The World Bank has suggested that this "pool of jobless and discouraged workers is one reason for the large extent of poverty" (World Bank 2003: 51). Moreover, while the difference between men's and women's official unemployment rates is marginal (14.3% for women and 11.2% for men), the large number of economically inactive women indicates that women may be withdrawing from the labor market at significant rates. In 2002, for example, whereas 55.3% of women were registered as part of the economically active population (including the 14.3% registered as unemployed), 44.7% of women were defined as economically inactive (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 52–53).

Women are also consistently more vulnerable than men to losing their jobs. By the end of 2002, 20.6% of unemployed women, compared to 15.6% of unemployed men, registered their reason for unemployment as being laid off (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 69).

Accurate figures on women's vs. men's retrenchment are not available, but anecdotal evidence suggests that many women who have returned to the home have done so as a result of losing their jobs. In particular, women have noted that preference for men, combined with the widespread belief among (mainly men) employers that women of childbearing age are more costly and "unreliable" because they are more likely to take off time for childbirth and rearing, have contributed to women's greater likelihood of being unemployed.⁸ Women's greater vulnerability to unemployment appears to be irrespective of their educational level: more women than men are unemployed in all educational categories, including those with higher education, secondary specialized and general education, and those without secondary education (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 70).⁹ And while men are most likely to be unemployed for 1–6 months, most women are likely to be unemployed for 6 months or longer. In short, women are more likely than men to be unemployed in all regions of the country and at all educational levels, and are more likely to remain unemployed for longer periods of time.

Effectively addressing the high levels of women's unemployment in the formal sector (often masked within the definition of women's economic inactivity levels) is central to efforts to reduce poverty and promote economic growth in the Kyrgyz Republic. In addition to contributing vital income that may mark the difference for the average Kyrgyz family between living in or out of poverty, increased household income is likely to have positive impacts on consumption and expenditure patterns and, in turn, economic growth. Moreover, ensuring that women's fundamental right to work is understood and protected despite the current difficult economic climate will be critical to ensuring that women will be able to contribute as equal members of society in the future.

Ensuring that measures to tackle the problem of low formal sector job creation account for and seek to address the problem of women's unemployment is therefore critical. In particular, efforts to improve the business environment to facilitate the growth of small enterprises in the formal sector and the creation of productive jobs should seek to ensure that women are identified as key beneficiaries. Moreover, programs designed to stimulate the incentives to operate in the formal sector should include women as a special target group, especially by providing the information (e.g., on formal registration requirements), skills training (e.g., on managing small businesses, writing credit applications), and support (e.g., provision of financing) that will enable women to participate more actively in the SME sector. Finally, developing an improved synergy between the skills being provided to women (and men) through the secondary and vocational education system and those that are required by the labor market is critical and could be enhanced by improving labor market data, particularly through employer surveys to identify labor market needs. Such surveys could also consider investigating gender biases among employers, particularly in recruitment and promotion.

⁸ This was noted repeatedly in discussions with women (and some men) in interviews and meetings undertaken during the CGA field work, November 2004.

⁹ Specifically, 59.9% of unemployed women had higher education compared to 40.1% of men; 57.2% of unemployed women had secondary specialized education compared to 42.8% of men; 51.6% of unemployed women had secondary general education compared to 48.4% of men; and 58.2% of unemployed women were without complete secondary education compared to 41.8% of men. (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 70).

B. The Gender Dimensions of the Informal Sector

The significant contraction in the formal labor market after independence and the economic restructuring program that followed has pushed many women (and men) into the informal labor market, which continues to provide employment for increasing numbers of short-, medium- and long-term unemployed throughout the country. In 2002, 56% of the women reporting themselves as employed said that they were employed “without a contract.” This total included those who defined themselves as employers, self-employed, members of production cooperatives, unpaid workers in family businesses, and those working on individual land plots (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 57). A recent meeting of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific/ADB on the nonobserved economy has noted that the size of the Kyrgyz informal sector is around 25% of GDP and that although both women and men participate, women’s participation in the informal sector is understated, as current statistical surveys (including labor force surveys) do not include casual or informal work activities undertaken by women (OECD/UNESCAP/ADB 2004: 8).

Although official data are scarce on the size and structure of the informal labor market, anecdotal evidence suggests that women make up a large share of it: as shuttle traders, market vendors, home workers, and paid carers. The growing numbers of women seeking credit to start up and/or continue privately run small informal-sector businesses also indicate that in contrast to the Soviet period, many women may now be operating outside the formal sector. Rising and persistent unemployment, the absence and high cost of childcare facilities, lack of start-up capital to launch small businesses, lack of business skills and market knowledge, and the cumbersome and often daunting procedures associated with entry into what is perceived as the predominantly “male” formal sector have all combined to push women into informal-sector employment.

In Bishkek alone, women dominate the small trade and fruit and vegetable market sector. A visit to Bishkek’s largest market, the “Osh” market, will find mostly women traders; most of the small traders that vend their wares on Bishkek street corners are also women. In addition, dozens of “illegal” sewing workshops operate in the capital, sewing products that are later shuttled by illegal traders to markets in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia (CEDAW 2002: 42). And in the smaller towns, it is mainly women who set up small shops, selling everything from soap to single cigarettes and extra produce from home gardens in front of their homes.

In addition, a significant (although as yet unquantified) number of women engage in “shuttle tours” and the “suitcase” trade (or the *chelnochny* business) by selling goods brought in from neighboring countries. It is also predominantly women who are traveling to other countries in the regions to sell cheaper Kyrgyz-made goods. Many of these women are married with children and leave husbands and other family members to care for children in their absence. Although the introduction of stricter customs policies and higher taxes in some neighboring countries has decreased this kind of trade in more recent years, many rural women still engage in it (World Bank 1999: 110).

Female street and market traders have reported that they perceive the informal sector to be less encumbered with bureaucratic procedures, have lower “informal” start-up and operating costs, and be flexible enough to enable them to combine work, child care, and other household work responsibilities. Many identified lack of capital and discrimination by lending institutions as a major obstacle to starting an enterprise in the formal sector.¹⁰

Although women perceive the informal sector to have a number of advantages, informal-sector employment often involves long hours of work, little pay, and difficult conditions that in some cases (i.e., street vendors) can pose real risks to personal security. Home-based work, while providing some solution for women who cannot afford child care, offers very poor financial returns on their labor, is isolated, and increases women’s levels of time poverty as they juggle the triple shift of undertaking home-based work, child care, and domestic tasks. Moreover, the absence of any form of social protection such as sick leave, maternity leave, or pension contributions leaves informal-sector workers extremely vulnerable to poverty in both the present and the future.

Further research and analysis of the gender dimensions of the informal economy is clearly important, not only to increase the visibility of the sizeable percentage of women working within it, but to provide an improved understanding of its contribution to economic growth and its links with poverty. This can, in turn, lead to more gender-sensitive policy making that provides social protection to women and other forms of assistance, such as credit and training. In addition to gathering more reliable data on the numbers of women and men engaging in the informal sector in rural and urban areas and across regions, and their profiles (i.e., age and income group) it is also important to better understand the drivers behind their shift to the sector and the perceived benefits as well as constraints.

C. Women’s Entrepreneurship and Credit

Although levels of women’s official entrepreneurship in the Kyrgyz Republic are low, it is clear that women are responding (in considerable numbers) to unemployment in the formal sector by establishing informal sector businesses, ranging in size from the corner street trader of cigarettes and snacks to larger market vendors. This suggests the need for interventions that would increase the incentives for women to shift their businesses from the informal to the formal sector as entrepreneurs of SMEs and provide the skills and access to production and markets that would enable them to do so successfully.

Recent studies by both the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) highlight the considerable difficulties facing the growth of the formal SME sector in general, while emphasizing that not only is such growth crucial to job creation, but it is also required to encourage the broader-based growth that is necessary to reduce poverty levels (World Bank 2000b, World Bank 2003: 61). Such impediments—both structural and other—face both men and women who wish to enter the sector, although arguably women remain considerably more disadvantaged by lack of assets, information, knowledge and training and, in some cases, values and attitudes that do not encourage women’s involvement in the formal private sector. As a

¹⁰ Interviews with the CGA team, November–December, 2004.

result of these impediments, the World Bank has noted that job reallocation in the Kyrgyz Republic in recent years has been mainly characterized by large inflows into subsistence agriculture and petty trade, mostly in the informal sector (World Bank 2003: 61).

In particular, overwhelming entry regulations, corruption, the complexity of tax regulations, and restrictive access to credit have been identified as key obstacles to establishing SMEs in the formal private sector. While the Government has taken some important steps to remove some of these entry barriers, many remain, including for many women (as well as men) a considerable average start-up cost of \$420 (World Bank 2003: 62). In addition, the start-up of a company requires on average two licenses, six certificates, and 30 additional permits in a 6-month period to continue operations (World Bank 2003: 62).¹¹ The large number of inspections and the frequent need to negotiate with government officials over application of regulations, as well as outright corruption and bribery, has also been identified as a major problem deterring potential entrepreneurs from entering the formal SME sector. While these assessments did not focus on the obstacles facing women entrepreneurs as a specific group, they do highlight the considerable barriers faced by potential women entrepreneurs and may explain why many women and men are operating in the informal SME sector.

Such barriers may underline why, according to official statistics, only 0.1% of employed women aged 15 years or over are formally classified as employers.¹² Although national laws and policies do not formally discriminate against women's equal participation in business ownership and administration, numerous informal obstacles have constrained women's ability to start up and maintain businesses. In particular, women have reported significant difficulties in obtaining capital (including discrimination in lending by some banking institutions); bureaucratic difficulties and "extra" costs associated with establishing and maintaining an enterprise; a lack of access to networks (e.g., trade and business associations as well as personal or familial support networks), markets, information, and training; and the stresses of combining unpaid household work and child care responsibilities with paid work.

Many women are also intimidated to enter what is clearly a male domain. In 2002, 60.4% of those in management positions in the finance sector and more than 70% of all owners of banks and insurance companies were men (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 59, 73). Women have reported real difficulties in negotiating as individuals with men loan officers. Some women have even reported that they have been told to go home and bring back their husbands if they want to apply for a loan.¹³ Finally, many women lack the information and knowledge required to start up SMEs. Business advisory services for women are sorely lacking in the Kyrgyz Republic, making it difficult for women to understand and negotiate the bureaucratic requirements of starting up an

¹¹ The World Bank also cites a study by USAID (2000) which estimates that the licensing process takes an average 10–21 days that it takes 26 days to obtain a single certificate, and more than 2 weeks to obtain a single permit.

¹² Official data on the numbers and percentages of women entrepreneurs should be regarded with caution due to data collection weaknesses. Official data for 2002 recorded only 8,200 women "employers" or 0.01% of all employed women. This does not significantly differ from the official men's entrepreneurship rates of 0.2% of all employed men (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 57).

¹³ From interviews conducted during CGA field work in November–December 2004.

enterprise and developing the skills required, such as creating business and financing plans and proposals.

Fostering women's access to self-employment and entrepreneurship in the Kyrgyz Republic will therefore require a multidimensional approach that involves strengthening entrepreneurial skills for women through training, retraining, special education programs, and comprehensive advisory and support services; providing technical and financial support to organizations assisting and training women entrepreneurs in creating SMEs; and ensuring equal access to credit, in particular through gender awareness raising among bankers and others influencing access to credit. Ensuring that laws and policies are supportive of and promote gender equality in business ownership and administration and that appropriate institutions and programs enforce such laws and policies would also facilitate women's entrepreneurship.

Underlying such efforts is the critical need to undertake detailed gender analyses of the SME sector, so that gender-specific barriers are clearly identified, understood, and effectively resolved at the policy-making and structural level. While women and men may face similar obstacles in many respects, some obstacles may be more pronounced for women (e.g., negotiating with government officials over licenses; obtaining access to credit through microfinance, credit, and banking institutions) and require specially designed interventions. Improved sex-disaggregated data on the formal SME sector are also required, so that the progress of men's and women's enterprises can be monitored and assessed. Finally, much greater emphasis needs to be given to studying the gender dimensions of the informal sector, particularly with a view to identifying what measures and/or incentives are required to encourage the women to shift to the formal SME sector.

D. The Gender Dimensions of the Rural Economy

The Kyrgyz Republic is predominantly a rural economy: over 60% of the population lives in rural areas. Agriculture and associated enterprises are the most significant area of economic activity. In 2002, agriculture accounted for 35.6% of GDP and provided about half of national employment opportunities (US Department of State 2005a). Only 7% of land (1.4 million hectares) is arable and approximately three quarters of it is irrigated. The main crops are cotton, winter and spring wheat, corn, barley, oats, vegetables, and tobacco.

Since independence, the Government has been steadily implementing a program of agriculture sector reforms focusing on (i) land reform and privatization of state and collective farms; (ii) liberalization of commodity processing and trade; and (iii) demonopolization and privatization of supply, marketing, and processing enterprises. The World Bank has estimated that rural poverty has decreased steadily between 1998 and 2001 at an average of 8% a year, suggesting that the reforms have had considerable impact. In particular, the agricultural sector has reversed the steep decline of the early 1990s and grew at an average of 6% a year starting in 1996 (World Bank 2003: 27–29).

While progress has been substantial to date in many areas of the reform process, poverty in rural areas remains acute: in 2002, 47% of rural households were defined as poor, compared with 39.6% of urban households. Of these poor households, 14.7% were classified as very poor. And

although poverty rates in rural areas declined over the period 2000–2002 from 56.4% to 47.0%, they remain only nominally lower than in 1996, when 49.6% of the rural population was classified as poor. Geographically, regional differences in poverty rates are significant: oblasts such as Naryn, Jalal-Abad and Talas have almost twice the rural poverty rates of Chui oblast (See Table 2) (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 76–77).

Women have also borne many of the reforms' most detrimental impacts. In particular, the former state and collective farms, on which many women were formally employed, maintained an entire infrastructure of support services that were crucial for rural women, children, and the elderly. These consisted of kindergartens, schools, hospitals, libraries, and other facilities, many of which were largely run by female staff. With transition and reform came the dismantling of this social infrastructure and most of the support services that it provided, including state-supported child care. Rural women also lost their jobs in significant numbers.

Many of these trends continue. According to census data, the share of women working in agriculture compared with other economic activities dropped significantly, from 64% in 1999 to 43% in 2003. In 2002, employment rates for rural women were 51.1% compared with 68.4% for men (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 53–55) and women's wages in the agricultural sector in 2002 continued to lag well behind men's, with a female-to-male wage ratio of 85.5% (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 65). Moreover, women head only 13% of all farm households (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 63).¹⁴

With the loss of state-supported child-care and elderly facilities, women in rural areas have been faced with increasing responsibilities to care for children and the elderly, usually in addition to income-generating work in the informal sector. Deficiencies in the supply of public services, particularly access to adequate sanitation and clean drinking water, also affect women disproportionately. Rural women also report that access to health care institutions has declined and the time required for traveling to more distant health care institutions has therefore increased since 1990.

Underlining these negative impacts has been a lack of systematic gender analysis in agricultural policy and programs. The 2004 *Agrarian Policy Concept of the Kyrgyz Republic to 2010* (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003d), which sets out the measures for implementing the Presidential Decree on Land and Agrarian Reform, as well as the commitments outlined in both the CDF and the NPRS, does not consider gender issues, although many of the sectors described in the policy—including farm development, crop production, animal husbandry, and food processing—clearly employ significant numbers of women. Nor does the policy concept, which aims to set out the approaches for achieving the goal of food security by 2010, consider women's central role within the family as a food producer and provider. In short, although many policy makers are aware that many farmers are women, failing to systematically consider gender issues at both the policy and program design level has meant that women's contribution to agriculture is poorly understood and their specific needs ignored in development planning and implementation.

¹⁴ These figures are drawn from the Agricultural Census 2002, which notes that of 217,174 farms, only 30,254 are headed by women.

National policies and programs in which gender is effectively mainstreamed do, however, require detailed analyses and data on the socioeconomic status of women in the rural sector and the gender impacts of the reform process. In particular, the reasons for and the impacts of the significant decrease in women's participation in agriculture over the last decade need to be more fully explored, and should include regional analyses. An analysis of regional poverty indicators and regional gender indicators, with a view to identifying correlations, would also permit improved and gender-sensitive policy making and improve the implementation of agriculture sector programs.

A study commissioned under this CGA (WESA 2005) of rural women's access to agricultural assets, inputs, and resources in Chui Oblast found that owning land without access to other assets (such as equipment), inputs (seeds and fertilizers), and other resources (e.g., training) does not offer adequate protection against poverty (Box 1). Chui Oblast, in the north of the country, is one of the most economically developed regions and leads agricultural production in the country. In particular, of the women farmers surveyed in the study, only 6.8% had access to agricultural equipment (e.g., tractors) with many (34.2%) paying high prices for such equipment. Moreover, 64.1% of women noted that they did not use commercial fertilizers due to the prohibitive costs. Similarly, only 17.9% of respondents were able to afford to purchase seeds, instead using low-grade recycled seeds of poorer quality.

Box 1. Hard Times on the Land for Kyrgyz Women

A woman land owner tells about her unsuccessful agricultural experience:

Last year I paid 300 soms (\$8) for plowing of 1 hectare of land. Besides, I should pay 200 soms (\$5) for harrowing, 300 soms for sowing and 800 soms (\$20) for combustive-lubricating materials. I used dung only; mineral fertilizers are not available for me. Weeding and irrigation was made by own strength. All summer I and my children spent in the field. I expected good harvest, but we had to take 12 tons of sugar beet with low saccharinity from 1 hectare. I paid 2,000 soms for delivery of production to Kaindinsky sugar refinery. As a result, I got enough income just to pay debts and buy some clothes for the children for beginning of school year. This year I'll lease the land and will work with the children in somebody else's field.

Source: WESA 2005: 12.

Inadequate access to transportation and market services was also identified by respondents as a major constraint to expanding their income-generating activities (i.e., sale of produce). Specifically, women noted that "problems of sale," e.g., selling produce such as sugar beet directly to the local refinery, presented special difficulties, as they were forced to stand in line for long periods, often with men, and undertake difficult negotiations with men buyers. One in five women interviewed noted that they lacked information on agricultural technologies: 43.5% highlighted the need to improve agricultural entrepreneurship skills. Due to the perceived high cost of credit and lack of access to credit institutions, only 20.5% of women had taken a loan in the last 10 years. Highlighting an increasing preference among agricultural enterprises to employ ("physically stronger") men and younger people for agricultural labor and/or to pay differential wages to men and women, women see developing small enterprises as one of the few remaining strategies for increasing their families' incomes (WESA 2005).

A key issue is that many agricultural sector development programs target the officially defined “head of household” or the primary land owner as the principal beneficiary of program interventions.¹⁵ Where agricultural programs have included women, they have tended to focus primarily on providing access to one or two of the above elements (e.g., increasing access to inputs like seeds or improving access to market facilities) rather than offering a full package of interventions that would together create a more enabling environment for their increased participation. Providing the comprehensive package of interventions to women in the same way that they are most often provided to men does, however, require taking into account and being responsive to women’s unpaid work responsibilities in the home. This could include, for example, community-based training programs (with child care options) and small-scale credit programs administered at the local/community level.

1. The Gender Impacts of Land Reform

The Kyrgyz Republic was one of the first countries in the CIS to initiate broad-based land reform and privatization of state and collective farms as part of its agriculture sector reform program. A referendum in October 1998 established a constitutional right to private ownership of land and subsequent legislation in June 1999 converted the existing use rights into private freehold ownership. In 2001, the law “On Management of Agricultural Lands” was adopted and remains one of the key normative legal acts regulating legal relationships to land.

Concern is considerable that provisions in the law on land and agrarian reform and in other laws, as well as customs and traditional practices regarding land ownership, transfer and inheritance, discriminate against women and prevent them from fully exercising their rights to land. For example, while the 2001 law “On Management of Agricultural Lands” does not contain explicit discriminatory provisions that would prevent or restrict women’s right to land, the use of the household as the legal unit means that in practice land titles are issued on a household basis and only the head of household is listed on the document—usually a man. Moreover, only one copy of the land title is issued to the “household” and usually to the named household head, leaving many women unable to access the document without first seeking the permission of the household “head” and with little awareness of their rights and entitlements. In addition, the current registration procedure in the Kyrgyz Republic provides that the entry in the registration book should list the name of the head of the family and the number of family members, but does not require the registrar to document the names of the family members who hold a land share represented by the certificate. As a 2001 World Bank-commissioned study has noted, large gender disparities exist in access to land due to the predominance of customary law, which supersedes written law in many rural areas. Customary law stipulates that men own the land and the house and women own moveable property within the house (Giovarelli et al. 2001).

¹⁵ The head of a peasant farm is defined as the person who “represents the farm in relations with individuals, legal entities, state authorities, conducts the business, concludes contracts on behalf of the farm, hires and dismisses the staff, issues authorities, commands the property and funds and executes other legal acts related to the activity of the farm” (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003e: 18).

The law also stipulates that agricultural land can be bequeathed to only one heir, who is customarily a male (brother, younger son, or other close male relative). The law's stipulation that land is indivisible and must be sold in its entirety also means that in practice a woman who divorces cannot "cash out" her part of the land except to other title holders; moreover, the provision that land plots owned by Kyrgyz citizens can be exchanged only within the same village means that in practice many of the women who divorce their husbands and usually return to their own family village cannot exchange or sell their share to purchase another. The requirement (under the law on "State Impositions of Tariffs") that any application for division of common property that is valued at more than 5,000 soms (about \$110) must include a payment in the amount of 10% of the total property value, means that many women voluntarily leave their property, or part of it—including land—with the husband or his relatives and return with their children to her parents' house with no assets. Finally, the lack of any right to entitlements for the growing number of "second" wives, who have no legal status, is a cause for concern (Box 2).

Box 2. The Gender Impacts of Land Reform: The Experience of Nurzat and Kamila

Nurzat married a young man from another village and had a child. Due to the fact that they lived together with the family of her husband when the land was distributed, the land share was allocated for 10 persons. But when she was widowed, she returned to her parents in another village. At the present time, her husband's parents are not against allocating her and her child's land share to them. But the local powers prohibit the action, because the land allocated to the family is indivisible.

Kamila was born in Talas and married a young man from Uzgen. Unfortunately, the family collapsed and the couple was officially divorced. Kamila, with her four children, returned to Talas to her parents. The land share of her children remained in Uzgen, because the land allocated for a family is considered to be indivisible and she cannot sell, exchange, or donate her share.

Source: WESA 2005: 2.

A clear need exists to further analyze women's de jure and de facto ownership and inheritance of land and to develop appropriate remedial responses to ensure that discrimination against the ownership, transfer, and inheritance of land is eliminated. The first phase of the UNIFEM project on the "Gender impacts of the land reform process," which is being implemented by the Women's Entrepreneurs Support Association (WESA), an NGO, has completed its analytical work and made some key recommendations to Parliament. These include changes and amendments to the law "On Management of Agricultural Land," regulating the indivisibility of land parcels, inheritance, donation, and sale-and-purchase, as well as to the law "On Imposition of Tariffs," which would abolish or provide waivers on the state levy for women applying to court for divorce and common property division (WESA 2003:3). UNIFEM is now implementing the second phase of this project, which, in addition to continuing to review the gender impacts of the legislative code, is seeking to develop entry points and mechanisms for increasing rural women's roles in decision making and assisting them with improved access to agricultural inputs and resources.

In addition to reviewing and making recommendations (if appropriate) regarding legislative amendments, further efforts are required to raise awareness among women and men of women's rights to land and to ensure adequate enforcement of the law. The issuing of actual copies of the

land title to all title holders could provide an entry point for land rights awareness activities and ensure that both men and women understand both their rights and their obligations. Improving the collection of sex-disaggregated data on land ownership is also critical and the database that is now being developed for documenting registered land titles should include the names of all title holders by gender.

E. Social Protection Programs

As noted above, the end of the fSU also meant an end to many of the social protection programs that had been provided by the state, including health care; income support for the disabled, infirm and elderly; guaranteed paid maternity leave; child-care centers; and a generous pension system. For many women, the dismantling of these support systems has meant not only a loss of the sizeable social protection transfers that contributed directly to their real incomes, but has also shifted many of the responsibilities of the former state to the household, where they are expected to do the majority of the work.

At present, the Kyrgyz social security system consists of three main pillars: social insurance (which includes pensions, limited sickness and maternity benefits, and funeral benefits for pensioners); social assistance, which includes the Unified Monthly Benefit (UMB); social allowances to defined categories of individuals unable to work; targeted subsidy schemes for the cost of utilities; and quasi-fiscal transfers associated with the consumption of electricity. The current level of budgetary resources committed to these social protection programs has decreased steadily from 20% of GDP in 1995 to 12% in 2001 (World Bank 2003:145).

While these programs may have helped to prevent an increase in poverty levels among certain groups,¹⁶ their limited size and scope and very low financial contributions clearly do not match the generosity and comprehensiveness of the former Soviet social security system and inadequately meet the needs of the extreme poor. For example, the UMB, which is targeted at the poorest families, only covers the income gap up to a threshold of 140 soms (approximately \$3.40) per month for each child under 16 (or under 21 if the child is in school), or approximately one fifth of the total poverty line. The World Bank's recent assessment (2003) concluded that within the current program mix, none of the programs helps households mitigate income shocks; that Government efforts are weakly targeted toward those in need; and moreover, the programs do not reach half the poor, including 40% of the extreme poor (World Bank 2003:159–160).

Nevertheless, for many of the poor in the Kyrgyz Republic, these social assistance payments, however inadequate, remain critical contributions to family income. In particular, pensions are and will remain a key income source for more than one third of the Kyrgyz population, including large numbers of women. In 2002, almost two thirds of all pensioners (319,497 out of 511,231 registered pensioners, or 62%) were women (World Bank 2003:159–160), with more

¹⁶ The World Bank has reviewed the effectiveness and efficiency of these social protection programs and found that without such transfers, poverty would have been even higher. However they also found that even those programs that have explicit poverty reduction objectives do not adequately cover the extreme poor and entail substantial leakage to the nonpoor (World Bank 2003: 145–171).

female than male pensioners in every region of the country. However, like other forms of social assistance, pension rates are extremely low—and significantly lower for women, whose average pension is only 81% of the average pension of men.¹⁷ Delays in payments are chronic and payments are often provided in the form of food or other products, placing extra pressure on families to seek additional income. While both men and women are affected by these pressures, it is often women, as the principal caregivers expected to purchase and cook food and provide for the family's basic necessities of living, who face the additional day-to-day stress of basic survival.

Recent reforms of the previous pension systems, which recognized and compensated women's reproductive roles and responsibilities, are also likely to have significant negative impacts on women. Pensions have historically been very important in preventing old age poverty among women working in the formal sector, and the fSU is no exception. With longer life expectancy rates and little to no formal asset holdings, working women counted on pensions to provide the primary source of income for the last 15 years of their lives (Castel and Fox n.d.: 1). Moreover, the different working histories of men and women, women's greater likelihood of being lower income earners and having shorter and more disrupted working careers (to give birth to and raise children, for example), as well as the transition period phenomenon of growing numbers of unemployed women entering the informal sector, where they are not pension protected, suggests that reforms that tie pension rights more closely to contributions will affect women adversely.

Under the former Soviet pension system, credit was given to women for years spent out of the labor force to have children: women with 20 years' service were allowed to retire at age 55 (5 years earlier than the normal retirement age for men); 55%–85% of wages were replaced, depending on the age at which a person retired. Under the new pension system, which provides income to approximately one third of all households in the Kyrgyz Republic, no credit is given for time raising children, the retirement age for women has increased from 55 to 58 years (men's retirement age was increased from 60 to 63 years), and the new "pay-as-you-go" pension scheme linking pension payments to contributions over time will penalize women who take time out from work for childrearing or who retire early. It has been estimated that given women's longer life expectancy, they will need to work longer than the minimum retirement age or face cuts in their benefits of 30–50%. The implications for increases in future poverty levels of elderly women are clear (Castel and Fox n.d.).

¹⁷ This is largely due to the linking of pension payments to contributions over time, which penalizes women who take time out from work for childrearing or who retire early (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 85).

A. Gender Issues in Education

The Kyrgyz Constitution provides for compulsory universal primary education and no legal provisions discriminate against women in terms of access to general or higher education. The education system consists of five principal levels: primary education (grades 1–4, 6–11 years old); basic secondary education (grades 5–9, 11–15 years old); high school or complete secondary education (grades 10–11, 15–17 years old); vocational/technical education; and tertiary education.

State budget expenditures for education in 2002 represented 4.5% of GDP, slightly lower than the 4.9% expended in 1998 but an increase over levels in 2000 and 2001, which saw expenditures drop to 3.5% and 3.9%, respectively.

The quality of educational outcomes in the Kyrgyz Republic is a real concern. While the vast majority of Kyrgyz children are enrolled in school, the learning environment is not conducive to high educational attainment and indications are that learning achievements are declining for both boys and girls, and that the problem is especially acute among the poor in rural areas. Limited state resources have translated into very low and often delayed teacher salaries, a lack of free books and educational materials, high levels of “additional” costs levied on parents, and the deteriorating condition of many school buildings. As a result, many children who are officially enrolled do not attend school regularly.

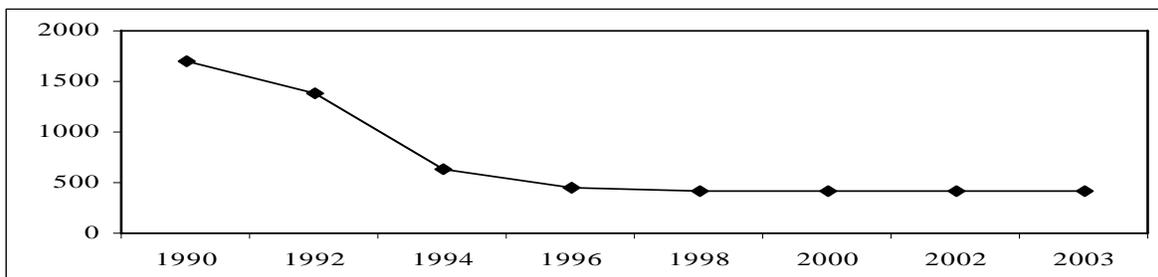
Government statistics indicate that the gross enrollment ratio for primary education at the beginning of the 2002–2003 academic year was 49.5% girls and 50.5% boys; for secondary education, the ratio was 52.4% girls and 47.6% boys. At the tertiary level, women make up 54% of all students, although fields of study are highly gendered: women dominate in such fields as education services and social and behavioral sciences and men in fields such as agriculture and fisheries, veterinary science, and engineering.

1. Preschool Education

Following independence, many kindergartens closed down and preschool enrollment declined overall from approximately 40% (of those 1–6 years old, with lower rates for the youngest and much higher rates for older children) to less than 10%. Recent studies estimate a rate of approximately 16% in urban areas, 8% in rayon centers, and less than 5% in rural villages (ADB 2003b: 26). Access to early childhood education has declined significantly since the Soviet period and is far behind desirable levels (Figure 3). The total number of preschools decreased from 1,696 in 1991 (UNICEF 2000: 126) to 412 in 2002 (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003c: 40) and while most pre-schools were previously in rural areas, the dismantling of the rural system has seen

a shift of pre-school facilities to urban areas.¹⁸ Costs are also beyond the reach of most Kyrgyz families: public kindergartens charge around 500 soms (\$12) per month and private kindergartens 2,500–5,000 soms (\$60–\$120) per month.¹⁹ As a result of these changes, many women with children in this age group have taken on the role of unpaid child-care providers, considerably impacting their capacity to work in formal sector employment.

Figure 3. Number of Operational Kindergartens in the Kyrgyz Republic, 1990–2003



Source: National Statistics Committee, Kyrgyz Republic (data provided on request).

In addition, the fSU education system included built-in comprehensive health services for pre-school children. This permitted early detection and treatment of health problems, including nutritional deficiencies, and many children in kindergartens and elementary schools received free meals. In 1990, 53% of children in kindergartens and elementary schools received free school meals; by 1996, that figure had declined to 2.4% (UNICEF 2000: 126). Today meals are provided—at additional cost to parents, a cost many parents can ill afford.

The lack of access to early childhood care and pre-schools has additional impacts on children and the school system. Children that begin primary school with no preparation tend to face greater social and academic hurdles, and are less ready to make the learning gains in primary grades that can promote their academic success later on. Primary school teachers are also affected, as the lack of preschools often means that a larger proportion of students require lower-order skill development, demanding changes in curriculum and pedagogy to accommodate a changing student population. Teachers rarely have the time, funding support, or materials to make such adjustments (Magno et al. 2003: 16).

2. Basic and Secondary Education

Like other countries in the region, the Kyrgyz Republic has remained committed to maintaining its basic education system, although serious financial constraints have limited the Government's capacity to provide an adequate level of services and infrastructure.

¹⁸ Figures provided by National Statistics Committee on request. UNICEF estimates that in 1991 there were 1,072 rural and 624 urban preschools and that by 1998, that figure had changed to 411 urban versus 164 rural preschools. These figures differ slightly from government statistics, which show 254 urban and 164 rural preschools in 1998 (or a total of 412). See UNICEF (2000: 126).

¹⁹ From interviews with CGA respondents during the CGA field work.

Government statistics show that overall enrollment figures for girls and boys are almost on par in grades 5–9. In 2002, however, fewer girls than boys (97.8 % of boys and 95.8 % of girls) were enrolled in Grades 1–4 (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 44), suggesting a decrease in girls' enrollments in recent (as distinct from earlier) years. The UNESCO gender parity index (GPI) for primary education over the last 10 years also shows a real *decrease* in the ratio of girls' to boys' enrollment levels, from parity in 1990 to 0.98 in 1998 and 0.96 in 2001. Similar patterns in gross enrollment, with the GPI decreasing from parity levels in 1990 to 0.98 in 1998 and 0.97 in 2001, confirm this decreasing enrollment trend among primary school-age girls. This decrease is worrying, particularly the relatively sharp decrease from 1998 to 2001. UNESCO estimates that gender parity may not be regained by 2015 unless adequate policies and strategies are implemented to increase girls' enrollment (UNESCO 2004: 372–378).

The reasons for this decrease have not been fully analyzed and need to be researched as a key priority. It may be, for example, that families, faced with the heavy (informal) costs of education and responding to changes in the formal labor market where boys are perceived as having greater opportunities and likelihood of employment, are making hard economic choices between the education of their sons and their daughters.

Children dropping out of school at both the primary and secondary levels are also a growing concern. Although the National Statistics Committee reports that only 1,344 children in the 7–17-year-old age group dropped out of school in 2003/4 (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 42), both aid providers and NGOs estimate that the figures are actually much higher, as many children are formally enrolled in school but do not regularly attend, largely for financial reasons.

Irregular attendance is also a growing problem and one that is not reflected in national statistics. Although data are lacking on this problem, it is understood that boys, more often than girls, skip classes or do not attend for periods of time due to the need to contribute to family income or work at home. Other reasons for nonattendance include not having proper footwear and clothing, lack of transport, and inability to pay the “extra” school fees that are levied on parents (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 42; United Nations 2002: 77). Further analysis of the scope, reasons for, and gender dimensions of nonattendance is clearly required at both the basic and secondary school levels.

A key problem for schools is the inadequacy of state funding. In general, schools are not able to operate at all without soliciting financial contributions from parents and undertaking fundraising activities. A 2002 UNESCO/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) national survey on learning achievements found that state budget funding for the schools surveyed covered only half of the total costs, i.e., staff salaries and some basic services. The remainder of the operating costs (including the bulk of maintenance work) was provided through parents' contributions and income-generating activities undertaken by the school. Most school personnel surveyed also stated that schools were frequently affected by electricity and heating cuts (particularly in the very cold winter months) and that the standard of sanitary facilities was poor and the water supply inadequate (UNESCO/UNICEF, 2003: 115–116).

3. Vocational Education

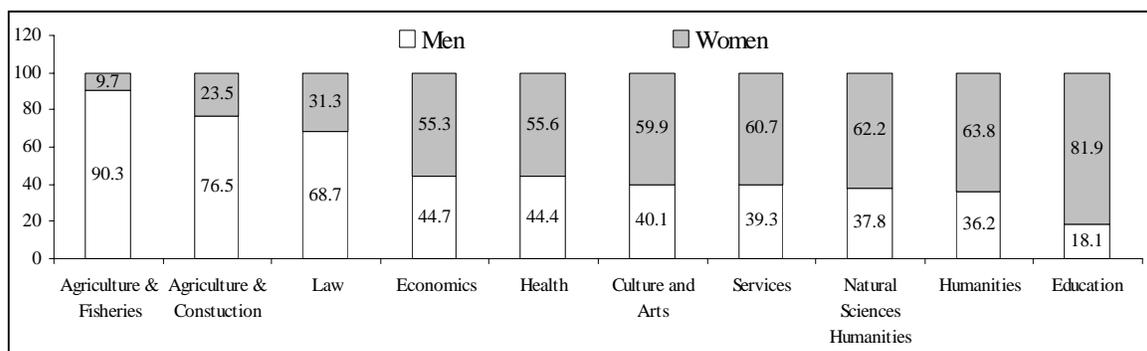
Vocational education has become crucial over the transition period, as many workers of the FSU found their existing skills and qualifications inappropriate to the needs of the developing market economy, which demanded new skills such as foreign languages and computer literacy. Although vocational educational programs claim to meet the employment demands of the new economy, the Kyrgyz Republic has not undertaken any comprehensive employer surveys that could provide more detailed information on the needs and expectations of employers, from which vocational training programs could be developed. Such surveys would enable better matching of skills training programs to employment demand, for both women and men. For example, World Bank statistics drawn from the Kyrgyz Poverty Monitoring Survey (World Bank 2000a) show large variations in unemployment across education levels and types, with the incidence of unemployment above the overall average of 22% for those with both general secondary (26%) and technical secondary education (24%), suggesting that further analysis of the match between vocational education programs and employment opportunities is required.

In 2002/2003, women made up 65% of all students in vocational training institutions and almost 60% of all graduates (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003c: 93). However, choices of study are much gendered and reflect male/female choices in fields of study at the tertiary level (see below), with women dominating strongly in fields such as education (83%), health care (89%), economics and management, and business administration (66%). As in the tertiary education sector, men dominate in fields such as engineering (72%), machinery building and metal work (85%), computer science (71%), and building and maintenance of technological machinery and equipment (95%).

4. Tertiary Education

Gender segregation in courses taken by women and men at tertiary level is growing: girls opt for degrees in teaching (81.9%), services (60.7%), social and behavioral sciences (64.7%), life sciences (84.6%), mathematics and statistics (66.7%), and health care (55.6%), while men choose fields such as agriculture and fisheries (90.3%), veterinary science (78.9%), engineering (69.5%), and law (68.7%) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Distribution of Students in Higher Education by Field of Study



Source: Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 48.

It is not clear whether women's choices in educational specialization are influenced by the growing segregation of the labor market, changing attitudes regarding "appropriate" female professions, or a mixture of both. This is an area that could benefit from further analysis and research. What is clear is that many women are choosing fields of study such as education (i.e., teaching) for which professional salaries are low and in which they are not fully represented at the managerial level. In the education sector, for example, although 81.9% of all students studying education at tertiary level and almost 48% of all teachers at vocational training centers, secondary specialized institutions, and higher education establishments are women, the ratio of women's to men's wages is only 77.9%—largely because women constitute only 37.3% of all those at management positions. A similar pattern is found in the health care sector, where women constitute 55.6% of all students at tertiary level, but earn an average wage of 83.2% of the men's wage and represent only 39.3% of managers (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 43–47 and 65–73).

5. Quality of Education

School enrollment and educational quality have deteriorated over the past decade due to the decline in income, depleted stocks of textbooks and other learning materials, an underpaid teaching force, and the physical deterioration of schools (Box 3).

Box 3. Equality and Equity

For disadvantaged groups, equal distribution of resources may not be sufficient to help them reach their full potential; special interventions may be necessary. For example, bringing young women from poor, rural areas into a university may fail to produce the desired outcomes unless adequate physical conditions (e.g., safe dormitories) and financial resources (e.g., scholarships) are provided to support them. On a larger scale, providing young women with equal access to education does not ensure their equal remuneration after graduation from educational institutions. In other words, gender-blind or gender-neutral policies may not necessarily lead to educational or social equity. Therefore, it is important to consider gender-transformative or gender-empowering approaches.

Source: Magno et al. 2003.

Education sector reform has been pursued since 1992, with the promulgation of the Education Law. Major measures adopted include (i) a new curriculum, textbooks, and learning materials; (ii) stronger pupil assessment and teacher training; (iii) delegated responsibility for management and financing of primary and secondary schools to local bodies; and (iv) upgraded and rehabilitated facilities and equipment. The Government has developed a concept paper for education development to 2010, providing the key policy and strategic framework for education. Nevertheless, the sector experiences several major problems: rising inequalities in access to, and declining quality of, education services; low teacher motivation, due to low salaries; and shortcomings in the delegation of responsibilities for primary and secondary schools to local bodies.

A 2003 Ministry of Education and UNESCO/UNICEF-supported national survey of the quality of learning in the 8th grade, provides some useful indicators of education quality through assessments of student performance, although unfortunately the survey results contain no sex-

disaggregated data that would be useful in pinpointing differences in girls' and boys' learning achievements. The survey, which took place in all regions, found that achievements were almost three times higher in urban than in rural schools; that in subjects like mathematics only 43% of students passed with positive grades; that achievement rates in the natural sciences were even lower, with only 25% receiving positive marks, and in physics over 80% of all students did not complete the required tasks (UNESCO/UNICEF 2003:110–122).

In the Kyrgyz Republic, as in most countries in the fSU, textbooks were intensively reviewed after 1991, although they continue to present strong gender stereotypes that may influence students and limit their aspirations artificially. While women are predominantly portrayed undertaking domestic activities at home, few examples are shown of men involved in domestic activity. The result is that domestic work, including the care of children, is presented as women's work and inappropriate for men. This legitimizes women's "double burden" of work inside and outside the home, which is a limiting factor in their career prospects. Textbooks also tend to present gendered occupational choices for girls and boys, with women depicted as schoolteachers, while men are depicted as agriculturalists and lawyers. Future assessments to and revisions of curricula, at all levels of schooling, need to ensure that, while setting clear national gender equity standards that promote gender equity objectives, curricula do not reinforce gender stereotypes.

B. Gender Issues in Health

Health care expenditures have declined steadily, from 4% of GDP in 1995 to 2.8% in 1998 and 1.9% in 2001. This has impacted strongly on the quality, affordability, and accessibility of health care services (World Bank 2003: 109). At the same time, considerable restructuring of the health care system has been taking place through the Manas Health Reform program, which began in 1993. This has included establishment of a Health Insurance Fund, the introduction of an incentive-based payment system, and the establishment of family medicine centers focusing on disease prevention and health promotion programs and interventions.

The decrease in government health care spending since 1995 has led to a considerable increase in formal and informal payments by patients themselves; these unofficial payments (ranging from payment for required medicines in hospitals to assure payments for good in-patient care) are a significant burden on the household budgets of low-income citizens. A large portion of these additional expenditures is directed toward health sector employees, who receive lower salaries than government workers in other sectors (in 2002 the average salary was 492.5 soms, or around \$12, per month) and therefore seek to compensate for their lower salaries by demanding informal payments for services and medicines that are supposed to be available at no cost. The World Bank estimated that in 1993, 11% of patients paid for health care, but that by 1996 that figure had reached 51%, with 74% paying for in-patient care, often (33%) by borrowing money or selling livestock or produce (World Bank 2003: 111).

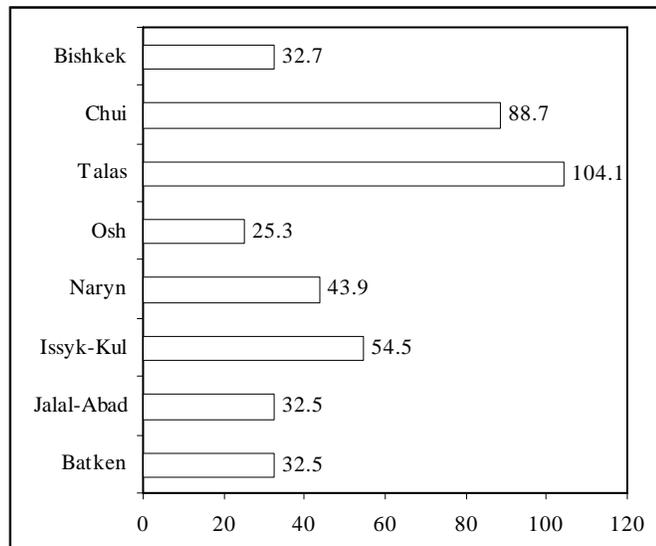
The impacts of these expenditures on (intra)household expenditure and consumption patterns have not yet been examined from a gender perspective, although evidence suggests that the impacts on the poor are significant; they are spending less on pharmaceuticals and other medical

goods and services and are seeking medical assistance in declining numbers compared with the nonpoor (World Bank 2003: 112–113). In these poor households, it is frequently women who are expected to meet the additional care requirements for sick children and other household members, including providing food and basic sanitary care for family members in hospital, as well as finding the additional funds to meet their own health-related expenses.

While many health indicators have improved over 1990 levels, they are still very poor in comparison with many countries in the region. If current trends continue, the likelihood that the MDGs #4 and #5 relating to reducing child mortality and improving maternal health may not be met is quite real.

In particular, MMRs in the Kyrgyz Republic have been slowly increasing again in the last several years, after a significant decline from 62.9 deaths per 100,000 births in 1990 to 45.5 deaths in 2000. This is despite an increase in the average first age of mothers from around 22 years of age in 1998 to 22.7 in 2000 and 23.0 in 2002, which frequently accompanies a decrease in MMRs (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 19). In 2002, MMRs had climbed to 53.5 per 100,000 live births. In 2002, rural women were three times more likely to die from complications of pregnancy than urban women, a significant increase over the mid-1990s, when rural women made up a little more than half of all maternal deaths (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 20).²⁰ A decline in pregnancy-related health services in rural areas, coupled with increasing costs, has been identified as the principal cause of this trend. Regional differences in mortality rates are also significant: the lowest rates occur in Osh (25.3) and Batken (32.5) oblasts and the highest rate in Talas (104.1) and Chui (88.7) oblasts (Figure 5).²¹ In 2002, easy deliveries made up only 40% of all deliveries, and only one third of all deliveries in the Batken and Talas oblasts (UNDP 2003: 27). Major causes of maternal mortality include hemorrhages, abortions, and sepsis; this suggests a lack of access to quality care at birth. Improving maternal health is a key focus of the *Djan Ene* Program 2003–2006, which seeks to improve the quality of and access to medical care before, during, and after delivery.

Figure 5. Maternal Mortality Ratio by Oblast, 2003



Source: Figures provided by National Statistical Committee.

²⁰ World Bank 2003: 20. In 1990, 69% all maternal deaths were of women in rural areas. By 1996, that figure had declined to 55% and in 1997 it was 57%. Maternal mortality rates for rural women as a percentage of total mortality rates have been increasing steadily since that time.

²¹ Figures provided by the National Statistics Committee.

The increase in the number of children born to unmarried women has been very significant: from 13% in 1990 to 32.7% in 2002, and while this increase is common to all age groups, it is highest in the 15–19-year-old age group, where the number of unmarried women giving birth was 55.5% in 2002 (UNDP 2003: 26). While no research has been undertaken to uncover the reasons for this worrying trend, one possible explanation may be the growing tendency toward customary marriages (e.g., the Moslem “*nikah*”), particularly in southern regions of the country, including many among underage women. Since the legal age of marriage in the Kyrgyz Republic is 18, many of these under-age customary marriages may not be formally registered and children born of such unions may therefore be officially registered as born to unmarried women. The numbers of these unmarried mothers who are actually single parents and the reasons for this (i.e., men’s migration) is not available but clearly has important policy implications if the numbers are significant. Moreover, the health risks of early pregnancies to both mothers and their children have been well documented in literature (e.g., delivery and post-partum complications, low birth-weights) and this trend needs to be closely monitored against maternal and child mortality rates for the same age group.

Abortion is legal in the Kyrgyz Republic up to the 12th week of pregnancy or for medical reasons until the 24th week of pregnancy, although the costs are not borne by the state. While the total number of abortions has declined overall from 17 per 1,000 women in 2000 to 14 per 1,000 women in 2002, rates for the 12–19 age group have increased from 5.1 per 1,000 in 2000 to 6.6 per 1,000 in 2002 (UNDP 2003: 36). The reasons for these high and increasing rates among very young women are not clear, but it is thought that limited access to and knowledge of the safe use of contraceptives may be a principal cause. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reports that in the year 2000, contraceptive use among women in the 15–19 age group was only 22.8%, despite this age group’s accounting for over 50% of all births (UNFPA 2002a: 41, Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 26).

The Government has recognized the need to improve the availability of and access to quality and affordable family planning services and has implemented a number of key reforms in this area in the context of broader health sector reforms and programs such as the nationwide *Manas*. However, access to affordable contraception remains below optimal levels and coverage levels show a decrease from 40% in 1999 to 33% in 2001 (UNFPA 2002b: 23). Meanwhile, official abortion rates, while showing real decreases over the last decade from 35.7% in 1995 to 14% in 2002, are still between 21% and 23% for women in the 25–34 age group, suggesting an unmet demand for contraceptives (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 37).

Although infant mortality rates continued to decline over the last 10 years, they remain dangerously high, even by regional standards: 21.2 per 1,000 live births overall. Moreover, these figures are considered to be conservative, as the Kyrgyz Republic has used a definition of live births different from the WHO definition, and it is widely anticipated that the adoption of the WHO criteria will lead to a further increase in the infant mortality indicators. Since 1990, a pattern of higher mortality rates for boys than girls has been consistent, and in 2002 infant mortality stood at 17.1 (per 1,000 live births) for girls and 25.1 for boys. The main causes of infant mortality have remained the same: conditions emerging in the prenatal period, including respiratory infection and failure, and infections (including diarrheal) diseases.

Under-5 child mortality rates reflect a similar pattern of decrease over time for girls and boys, as well as higher overall mortality rates for boys: 24.9 deaths (per 1,000 births) for girls in 2002 compared with 33.0 for boys, a considerable decrease from 1990, when figures were as high as 36.9 for girls and 45.4 for boys. However, as with the infant mortality figures, the decline in the overall rate has been largely due to declines in rates in the rural areas (from 41 in 1990 to 23.8 in 2002 for girls and from 48.6 to 30.9 for boys) with urban rates remaining the same as those of 10 years ago (27.4 in 1990 to 27.1 in 2002 for girls and 37.9 to 37.7 for boys). Major causes of under-5 mortality are conditions emerging in the prenatal period: respiratory diseases and infectious and parasitic diseases.

Poor nutrition is one of the most serious health issues in the Kyrgyz Republic. Children, especially those who live in poverty, without an adequate diet and access to basic sanitation facilities and health care, are a particularly vulnerable group. The real concern is that high rates of wasting, stunting, anemia, and IDD will have serious intergenerational impacts unless urgently addressed. In 2002, 12.1% of all children under 11 years were recorded as underweight, with more underweight girls (13.3%) overall than boys (11.0%). Differences in the percentage of underweight boys and girls in different age groups are significant: slightly higher percentages of boys in the 1–6-year-old group are underweight (12.9% for boys and 12.0% for girls), but more girls are underweight than boys in the 7–11-year-old age group (14.8% of girls and 9.5% of boys) (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 84). Regional variations are also strong: more underweight children can be found in Bishkek and Chui, even though poverty rates for these two regions are lower than elsewhere (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 84). Further analysis of the interplay between gender, age, and the regional dimensions of poor child nutrition in the Kyrgyz Republic should be a key priority.

The incidence of anemia and IDDs has grown significantly in recent years. This has particularly serious consequences for women in their reproductive years. In 2001, approximately 60% of women of reproductive age in the Kyrgyz Republic suffered from anemia and anemia affected on average 56.2% of all pregnant women in 2001, compared with 25.2% in 1990 (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 38). Moreover, it is estimated that in 2001, 50% of children under 3 suffered from anemia (UNDP 2003: 27). One of the country-level MDG targets (under MDG #5, Improving Maternal Health) is that the proportion of pregnant women suffering from anemia should at least return to 1990 rates by 2015.

Iodine deficiency is a serious and growing health problem in the Kyrgyz Republic. Programs started in the fSU to ensure the supply of iodized salt were seriously disrupted after independence and it is estimated that 52% of children and adolescents in the north of the republic and 87% in the south suffer from diseases related to iodine deficiency. The National Program for Reduction of Iodine Deficiency Diseases for 2003–2007 is attempting to address this problem with assistance from ADB and other development partners.

High active tuberculosis (TB) rates also persist, despite some marginal decreases in recent years. In 2002, male morbidity rates were 190.3 and female rates 106.1 per 100,000 of the population, a decrease from 2001, when rates were 228.9 for males and 108.1 for females, but still significantly higher than rates from 1998 (153.9 for males and 89.1 for females). In particular,

while this recent decrease in the morbidity rates of active TB among men is significant, it is almost negligible for women. Moreover, although 63.7% of diagnosed cases are in men, women's morbidity rates have been increasing more rapidly than men's: the number of women diagnosed in 2002 was almost 54% higher than for 1997. For the comparable period, rates for men increased by 35%, from 3,442 cases in 1997 to 4,670 cases in 2002 (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 31). It will be critical to monitor the recent downward trend closely to determine if prevalence is in fact decreasing or if other factors, such as decreasing utilization of diagnostic health services, are the principal causes.

The limited evidence available also suggests that male health issues in the Kyrgyz Republic are significant (and unaddressed). Male life expectancy at birth is significantly lower than that of females. In 2002, it was 64.4 for males compared to 72.1 for females. An analysis of trends over time, however, does not suggest that the transition period has had a significant impact on male life expectancy overall; a slight increase was shown, from 64.2 years in 1990 to 64.4 years in 2002. On the other hand, female life expectancy over the same period has declined by 0.5 years from 72.6 years to 72.1 years (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 16).

In overall terms, men are much more prone to alcohol and drug dependence than women. Male rates of alcohol dependence have increased rapidly over the last 10 years. In 2002, the *official* alcoholism rate for men had increased threefold to 90.3 cases per 100,000 populations, compared with 37.3 in 1998. In 2002, men were six times more likely to have an alcohol dependency problem and 15 times more likely to have a drug dependence problem than women (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 33).

1. Gender and HIV/AIDS

It is widely agreed that official statistics on the numbers of men and women in the Kyrgyz Republic with HIV/AIDS underrepresented the actual situation and that significant investments need to be made in improving data-collecting capacity.

The leading mode of infection transmission remains intravenous, with the highest infection rates in the capital, Bishkek, and the southern city of Osh. An estimated 60,000 people in the Kyrgyz Republic are injecting drug users (IDUs) and in some cities the prevalence of HIV among them is over 20%. Sex-disaggregated data for IDUs are not currently available. The trend is toward an increasing number of people infected by the sexual mode of transmission—from 8% in 2001 to 16.5% in 2004—and the Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS) reports a growing rate of HIV infection among women (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 33). However, the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS have not been fully explored and further research (for example, on the sexual behavior of men and women before and after marriage, or temporary migrant laborers) is necessary.

According to official figures, in 2002 the Kyrgyz Republic had 278 registered HIV-positive cases, of which 23 were women. While these are relatively low figures compared to Russia, Estonia, and Ukraine, where prevalence rates at the end of 2001 were close to 1% of the adult population (UNAIDS 2003: 5), UNDP has noted that the number of newly diagnosed HIV

cases is growing rapidly (from these low bases) and that the centralized nature of government, combined with relatively low income levels and weak public health system capacity, make countries such as the Kyrgyz Republic potential epidemiological flash points (UNDP 2003: 20).

In 2002, 67.1% of all diagnosed patients with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were women, more than double the figure for men (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003B: 34). Sex workers, for whom negotiating safer sex (in particular, condom usage) is problematic, are a particularly vulnerable group. UNAIDS estimates that Bishkek alone has around 5,000 sex workers, and that this number is growing at an alarming 1,000 new sex workers per year. Of these, it is estimated that 10%–30% are IDUs (UNAIDS 2003). While sex-disaggregated data are also not available on the sex worker industry, anecdotal evidence from NGOs and community groups suggest that most are women.

Although published data are scarce, available evidence also strongly suggests that migration (including temporary labor migration) increases the risk of HIV infection. Increases in the numbers of trafficked women and girls in recent years are of particular concern, especially since many of them are forced into sex work in destination countries, where they become highly vulnerable to HIV and other STIs. The Kyrgyz Republic has also been identified as a “destination” country for traffickers, where women and girls are often sold into prostitution—particularly in the larger centers of Bishkek and Osh.

While information on sexual behavior and attitudes in the Kyrgyz Republic is limited, research supported by the UNIFEM project “Gender Aspects of HIV/AIDS” and undertaken by an NGO, the Women’s Support Centre, in 2004 showed that condom use was still very rare, primarily due to negative attitudes of male partners, usually husbands. The study, which took place in three regions, also suggested that embedded gender stereotypes (e.g., that girls should be virgins at marriage and are at fault for not producing children, especially male heirs) compounded by a reluctance to discuss sex and sexuality, are the most important factors contributing to women’s vulnerability in the sexual sphere, including their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. The study also highlighted a general lack of awareness of HIV/AIDS among adults, noting that in many instances children were better informed than their parents (WSC 2003). This suggests that public information campaigns via educational institutions are having a positive impact and points to the need for improved public information among sexually active adults, including those in vulnerable target groups such as families engaging in temporary labor migration (many of whose members are women) and prostitutes.

Responses to the growing threat of HIV have been in place in the Kyrgyz Republic for several years. The State Program on the Prevention of AIDS was adopted in December 2001, with emphasis on information, training, advocacy, and prevention; an interagency program on HIV/AIDS prevention was signed with the Kyrgyz Government in April and launched in June 2002. An HIV/AIDS Thematic Group was subsequently established to provide a mechanism for the various agencies to coordinate HIV/AIDS prevention activities.

Such efforts need to be sustained and expanded to respond to the needs of all vulnerable groups, including sex workers, trafficked persons, and labor migrants, if the threat of an increase in

HIV/AIDS transmission rates is to be effectively addressed. Women within each of these vulnerable groups, particularly young women in the economically active age group, are at especially high risk and programs need to respond more adequately to their specific needs.

2. Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence is a serious women's health issue in the Kyrgyz Republic. Although the cycle of poverty/discrimination/economic disempowerment/VAW is increasingly being acknowledged by the development community worldwide, by and large VAW in the Kyrgyz Republic is still broadly understood as a private rather than a public issue, despite the clear evidence that it has significant implications for women's health, well-being, and in turn, productivity.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, as elsewhere, gender-based violence takes a number of different forms, including battery; psychological and verbal abuse; sexual abuse; rape and sexual assault (including within marriage); bride abduction; sexual harassment and intimidation at work, educational institutions, and elsewhere; trafficking in women; and forced prostitution. It also takes place in different locations, including the home, the community, and the workplace.

The collection and documentation of both quantitative (i.e., occurrence) and qualitative data on gender-based violence is in its infancy in the Kyrgyz Republic. Data on violent acts against women both inside and outside the home are limited. In its recent (2004) Beijing +10 Report, the Kyrgyz Republic noted that statistical data from women's crisis centers and shelters showed that in the period 1997–2001, 29,300 women and girls sought assistance and that more than 50% of these women and girls had stated that they had experienced violence within the family. The same report also notes that as many 10,000 police callouts to family incidents are recorded annually (CEDAW 2002: 57). Official figures are, in contrast, much lower: in 2002, only 3,297 registered crimes were committed against women and of those, only 219 were registered as rapes. No figures are recorded for assault and 324 of the 3,297 recorded crimes are classified as "intentional light health harming" crimes (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 91). NGOs (e.g. Diamond, Sezim, the Association of Crisis Centers, Chance, Alga, and other regionally based organizations) active in the area note that due to the concealed nature of crimes of domestic violence in particular, the figures are in reality much higher and that the figures for rape, including marital rape, are up to five times higher than official figures.²²

Gender-based violence in the Kyrgyz Republic needs to be understood as a manifestation of unequal relations between men and women, rather than as a symptom of the difficult transition to a market-based economy. Anecdotal evidence suggests that gender-based violence in the Soviet period was widespread but rarely reported, rather than nonexistent, as some commentators have suggested. What is clear is that the changes that have taken place over the transition period, including widespread unemployment and increasing levels of poverty, have contributed to increasing levels of VAW and that the violence arises from the persistence of historically unequal

²² Interview with Diamond Association, Bishkek, November 2004. Diamond Association is one of the lead NGOs working in the area of VAW in the Kyrgyz Republic.

gender relations. Curbing and indeed preventing gender-based violence, therefore, requires a more holistic and integrated approach that recognizes the need to address gender inequality as a root cause of such violence.

Current efforts to end violence against women are growing and are increasingly a key focus of the policy and program work of the NCWFGA and its Secretariat. With the support of UNIFEM, the Secretariat has worked to develop mechanisms and procedures for improving statistics and data on the level and forms of VAW. In 2005, following work done by the Secretariat, sex-disaggregated systems for collecting data on both victims and perpetrators of violence were introduced into law enforcement agencies, which will also be required to record the different types of family violence (e.g. physical, psychological) perpetrated. NGOs have also been particularly instrumental in highlighting the extent and severity of the problem in the public domain and in effectively lobbying the Government to introduce and pass protective legislative measures. In addition, at the national and local levels, a number of women's organizations have taken the initiative to establish safe houses and counseling services for victims, a move which has recently found financial support and other support (e.g., the provision of premises from the Bishkek City Mayor's Office and reduced operating [utility] costs payments) from the Government.

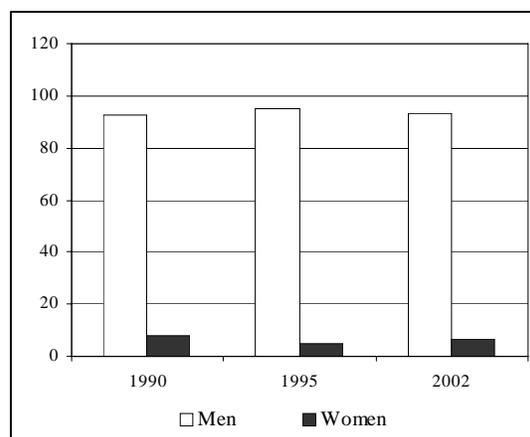
The NPA for Achieving Gender Equality (2002–2006) has identified “decreasing all forms of violence” as a strategic area of activity and identified a number of specific areas for action. These include training for officers of law enforcement bodies, staff of educational institutions, and students; the creation of a network of consultative services that provide free legal and psychological support; rehabilitation programs for perpetrators of violence; and the improved collection of statistical data and indicators. The NPA does not, however, have the required or available resources to implement these actions.

A. Gender and Governance Issues

The Kyrgyz Republic is a presidential democracy with a Parliament consisting of directly elected members: Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh. The Election Code, which was adopted in 1999, gives all citizens aged 18 and over the statutory right to vote and be elected, regardless of their origin, sex, nationality, religion, and political convictions. In practice, however, women's participation in the political process and their representation within elected bodies have decreased significantly since independence. Women's declining political participation in the democratic process, coupled with their lack of representation in decision-making structures, is one of the most pressing gender issues in the Kyrgyz Republic today.

In particular, the end of the Soviet quota system, which reserved 33% of places in elected power structures (including Parliament) for women, has resulted in a sharp decrease in the representation of women at all levels in elected bodies, even though women make up 52% of the electorate. Following the 2002 elections, women made up only 6.7% of Deputies in the Jogorku Kenesh, or 7 out of a total of 105 Deputies (Figure 6). This represents only 10.7% of the 65 woman candidates. In contrast, 17.5% of men (98 out of 561 candidates) were successfully elected.²³ In the parliamentary elections that followed the political upheavals of 2005, only 38 of the total 397 candidates were women (9.5%). Of these, only 3 made it to the second round of ballots, and two of them were disqualified for election infringements, leaving only one. In this current Kyrgyz Parliament, therefore, women constitute only 1.3% of all elected deputies.

Figure 6. Men and Women Elected to Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament), 1990–2002



Source: Central Election Committee 2004, statistics obtained on request.

In 2004, only two women occupied ministerial positions in the Government out of a total of 14 posts. Moreover, since 1990, ministerial appointments for women have been limited to just three portfolios: the Ministries of Education, Justice, and Labor and Social Security; a woman was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1994–1997. No woman has ever held the key post of Minister of Finance.

²³ Statistics obtained on request from the Central Election Committee, 2004.

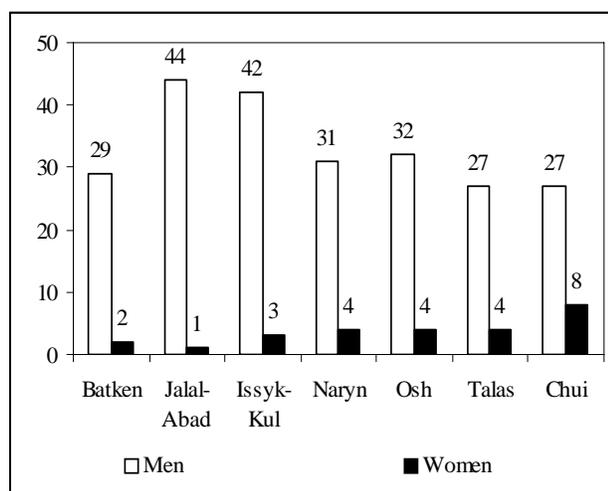
This low level of representation is also reflected at oblast and rayon levels. Figures from the National Statistics Committee for 2003 show that of the 258 deputies at oblast level, only 26 (or around 10%) were women (Figure 7). Although women's representation varies somewhat between different oblasts, from 29.6% women deputies in Chui oblast to 2.2% in Jalal-Abad oblast, women's representation was consistently below that of men, and only Chui oblast had more than 15% women deputies (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 71). Moreover, only one of the seven regional governors was a woman and in 2004 not a single woman headed any of the 40 rayon administrations.²⁴

Gender issues are also not systematically addressed within the platforms of political parties or as part of their political campaigns, even though 52% of the Kyrgyz Republic's voters are women. As the Kyrgyz national report to the CEDAW Committee noted, the women who constitute the majority of the electorate "are putting male politicians in power but are not themselves becoming equal partners in the decision-making process" (CEDAW 2002). In the same report, it is noted that "there are no plans contained in the programs of the majority of parties to support women's political involvement, to encourage the promotion of women to leadership posts or to attract women into the parties' ranks."

The dramatic decline in women's political representation following the dismantling of the Soviet quota system suggests that cultural and social stereotypes that locate women's roles and responsibilities in the "private" sphere of the home as mothers, wives, and caretakers were "hidden" rather than eliminated during Soviet rule. In their report to the CEDAW Committee, the NCWFGA noted that in addition to having to contend with these reemerging values and attitudes, women lacked an awareness of their political rights and the confidence and skills to engage in what is increasingly understood as a "male" domain (CEDAW 2002).

An additional constraint on women's political participation is the requirement that all electoral candidates must pay a registration fee of 30,000 soms (about \$714) up front to participate in the electoral process. Providing she has employment, the average women's monthly salary of 964.6 soms (about \$23) would not be adequate to meet these costs, particularly as the majority of women work to provide essential family income on which the health and livelihood of the household depend (Kyrgyz Council of NGOs 2003: 9).

Figure 7. Men and Women Deputies at Oblast Level, 2003



Source: Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 71.

²⁴ Figures obtained at request from State Electoral Commission 2004.

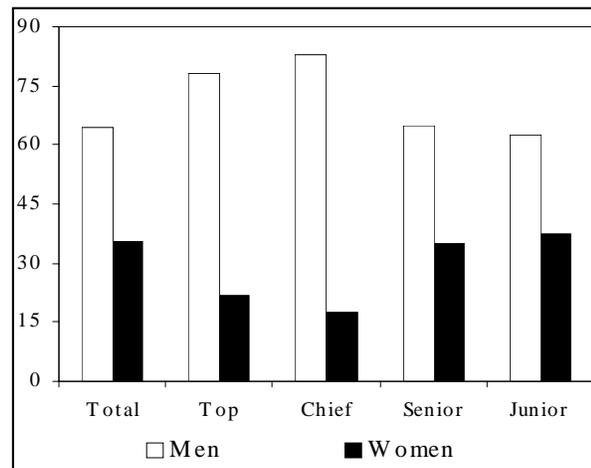
Following the events of March 2005, a Constitutional Council was established by Parliament with a mandate to review and amend the current Constitution. Composed of government and civil society representatives (including some from NGOs, although regrettably few from active women's NGOs), the Council includes a core working group that has developed a draft version of a revised Constitution. This is now being subjected to a process of public debate before finalization and finally approval. Although no gender specialists were appointed to assist the Council in its deliberations and drafting work, the NCWFGA has undertaken a review of the gender equality impacts of the draft document and developed a range of related proposals. Supporting a final approved Constitution that effectively guarantees and promotes gender equality (and defines key terms, such as discrimination) will be key to providing the critical legal enabling framework for the implementation of policies and programs across all sectors in the future.

The number of women employed in government positions is also very low compared to men, particularly at senior levels (Figure 8). As of 1 October 2003, women occupied only 21.8% of "top" positions in Government (i.e., Minister/Deputy Minister), and those positions are concentrated in ministries like Education and Culture, Health, and Labor and Social Protection. No women hold top positions in key ministries such as the Ministry of Finance or Ministry of Agriculture, the Central Commission on Elections and Conduct of Referenda, or the Administration of the President. Of the 44 listed ministries and agencies, 26 (59%) had no women at "top" levels of administration, although 43 of the 44 ministries and agencies had men in these "top" positions.

At junior levels, the balance of representation is also strongly in favor of men (62.6% compared to 37.4% for women), suggesting a predominantly male cadre of employees from which future "top" and "chief" employees will be drawn (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 74–75).

The NPA for Gender Equality includes several measures to increase women's representation at decision-making levels, including the development of leadership training programs for women and public information campaigns that promote women's equal participation in state and judicial bodies. These have yet to be fully implemented, however, and require considerable financial inputs if they are to be effectively realized. Several development partners are also currently working with the Government to address these issues. The joint UNDP and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency "Gender in Politics in the Kyrgyz Republic" project aims to strengthen women leaders' capacity, enabling them to participate more actively in the electoral process. UNDP also has a gender component in its Social Governance Program that has been implemented since 2001.

Figure 8. Ratio of Men to Women Employed in State Administration Bodies, 2003



Source: Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 74–75.

B. Civil Society Organizations Addressing Gender Issues

In little more than 10 years of post-Soviet independence, a vibrant, growing, and increasingly organized civil society and women's movement has developed in the Kyrgyz Republic. NGOs such as the Diamond Association, Sezim, the Women Entrepreneurs Support Association (WESA), the Alga Association of Rural Women, the Association of Crisis Centers, the Centre of Gender Studies, the Forum of Women's NGOs, and other organizations have all played an important part in the development of a women's movement and the promotion of gender equality. To promote outreach, many of these NGOs have established regional outposts and networks, which are often staffed by volunteers. Most are also heavily dependant on external funding, usually through international aid provider organizations, including international NGOs. Outside these formal NGO's, which are most commonly based in larger cities and towns, few formal mechanisms (such as parent-teacher associations) exist in which women can participate at the community level.

The boundaries of the activities of different women's NGOs in the Kyrgyz Republic are changing: many former "professional" associations, such as the associations of women entrepreneurs, farmers' associations, and credit unions; and "academic" and/or research-based associations, are becoming more active, and more of the newly established "activist" NGOs are undertaking in-depth research and analysis to inform the development of programs and projects. Cooperation is also growing among these NGOs, as well as between them and those NGOs that arose from the former Soviet public organizations, such as the women's committees. In short, the women's NGO movement in the Kyrgyz Republic is developing rapidly, has a growing presence and outreach, and is becoming more homogenous in its activities. The principal areas on which NGOs have focused their activities have been violence (e.g., the Diamond Association, Association of Crisis Centers); the impact of the land reform process on women; to a limited extent, the provision of microcredit, training, and business support services (WESA); and undertaking gender reviews and assessments of existing legislation (Association of Independent Scholars-Lawyers).

NGO-state collaboration in the Kyrgyz Republic is still at an early stage of development and further cooperation will be crucial in efforts to reduce poverty and promote economic growth, particularly in ways that improve both government and civil society sensitivity to gender issues and support action to promote gender equality. At present, considerable efforts are being made by the NCWFGA Secretariat to work collaboratively with women's NGOs and to be as inclusive as possible. For example, NGOs have played an active and influential part in undertaking gender analysis of current and proposed laws and have even been instrumental in the drafting of legislation and successful in their efforts to ensure its passage through Parliament (Box 4). They have also collaborated closely with the Secretariat to develop the NPA, including the indicators for monitoring progress.

Box 4. Ending Gender-Based Violence: a Public Initiative

In 2003, in recognition of the need for legal protection for persons subject to domestic violence, a women's NGO, the Diamond Association, in partnership with the Association of Independent Lawyer-Scientists of the Kyrgyz Republic, submitted a draft bill to the Parliament on protection against family violence. Using for the first time a constitutional provision that requires the collection of 30,000 signatures to submit a draft bill for consideration, the NGOs, using a network of crisis centers and a range of other public information tools, collected 36,000 signatures, laying the legal basis for submission of the draft bill, which was subsequently adopted by Parliament as the "Bill on Social and Legal Protection Against Family Violence" (2003). The law provides legal protection in the form of court orders and establishes a system of administrative and civil tools (including NGO-government partnerships), to prevent and address family-based violence.

Source: Tugulbaeva 2003.

Within the wider Government is a broader recognition that the success of development efforts, particularly in the context of implementing the current and future NPRS, will require the active participation of NGOs and community-based organizations. A number of obstacles to such participation still exist, including the absence of a regular coordinating mechanism between the Government and NGOs and among NGOs themselves. This is important if progress and lessons learned from initiatives undertaken by both the Government and NGOs are to be shared and built upon. In particular, more broadly sharing the progress and outcomes of innovative initiatives, such as the gender-budgeting at local council-level projects being implemented by UNIFEM with support from WESA, could strengthen the development of future partnerships.

Women's NGOs in the Kyrgyz Republic are also beginning to develop stronger links with the international women's movement, largely through the lens of the Beijing Platform for Action and, increasingly, the MDGs. In particular, NGOs, often working collaboratively with the Government, have begun to cooperate at the regional level on common gender-based issues such as VAW, trafficking of women and children, HIV/AIDS, gender and governance (most prominently women's low levels of political participation across the region), and the current and potential impact of the (re)emergence of patriarchal traditions and customs. Room for the further development of and support for such regional cooperation is considerable. Appendix 5 provides a list of NGOs working on gender issues in different regions in the Kyrgyz Republic.

C. Contributions of Other Stakeholders

While many of the CBOs and NGOs that have emerged from the burgeoning civil society movement in the Kyrgyz Republic do not have a specific focus on gender equality issues, a small but growing number of active and effective women-led and -managed organizations, supported by a range of international partners such as UNIFEM, the Soros Foundation, UNICEF, and the World Bank, are developing stronger regional networks and a capacity to undertake research as well as implement programs. Encouragingly, evidence of collaboration with the Government is increasing at both the program and policy levels, particularly through the NCWFGA Secretariat.

International NGOs have also played an important role in strengthening and supporting national organizations and groups focusing on gender issues. These include the Rural Development Institute, which has undertaken research on gender and land reform issues; and the Soros Foundation, which is currently researching the issue of polygamy, has supported national efforts to address the real and growing problem of VAW, and is working to improve gender sensitivity within both the media and academic institutions.²⁵ The Swiss-supported program, Helvetas, has focused on community-based gender initiatives within the larger Krygyz/Swiss agricultural project, and organizations such as Winrock International and the IOM continue to focus primarily on trafficking and migration-related issues.

The key international development partners supporting gender mainstreaming and gender equality initiatives have been the UN agencies, the World Bank, and, at a more localized level, the Soros Foundation. In particular, UNIFEM/UNDP are currently focusing their efforts on working with the Government to develop appropriate (gender-sensitive) indicators for the MDGs and have previously supported development of the NPA. Several years ago, UNDP convened a Gender Consultative Group, which consisted of aid provider and occasionally government representatives, and has provided an opportunity to regularly discuss gender issues and coordinate the development of policy and program interventions. ADB is the largest aid provider in the Kyrgyz Republic and has supported a number of projects that have had a social sector focus. Appendix 4 provides a selective list of the activities of the key international development partners working on gender-related issues in the Kyrgyz Republic.

²⁵ Under the latter program, the Soros Foundation has worked with the Secretariat of the NCWFGA to train more than 40 teachers for higher educational institutions across the country.

A. Temporary/Illegal Migration

High inward migration (i.e., to Bishkek and other major towns) and outward migration (i.e., to Russia) of men and women for employment has been a growing phenomenon over the last decade and has paralleled the contraction in the official domestic labor market and the loss of a strong system of social support and protection. The IOM estimates that from 1990 to 2002 more than 454,000 people left the Kyrgyz Republic—accounting for approximately 10% of the total population—largely in search of employment. Around 70,000 specialists with higher education, including many women, left during the period 1990–2001; that figure represents about one third of the total specialists in the country (Glodenyte 2003). International migration rates from the National Statistics Committee show that for every year during 1996–2003, more women than men left the country.²⁶

However, much migration is also of an informal and temporary nature. Women often travel more than men to work and leave other family members to care for children in their absence. While data on this group are limited, national statistical data show a higher female than male interblast migration rate for every year from 1996 to 2003.²⁷ A recent study commissioned under this CGA of the gender dimensions of migration in the Kyrgyz Republic noted that women internal migrants often find work more quickly than men, but primarily because they are prepared to work for lower pay and undertake “any kind of work” (Centre of Public Opinion 2005: 7). The study found that women work primarily in the informal sector in small trade (as hawkers and in the markets selling goods and produce), in the service sector (as cleaners, housemaids, dishwashers, and waitresses) and in the production sector (baking, manufacturing) and are generally not covered by any kind of labor agreement or protection. It was also noted that the children of these migrant workers often did not attend school and were either working with/for their parents in the workplace (e.g., as *arbakech* in the markets carrying goods to and from) or at home minding younger children, cleaning the house, or cooking) (Centre of Public Opinion 2005: 8).

A significant (but as yet unaccounted for) number of women and men leave each year to work on tobacco plantations in Kazakhstan. The majority of these workers come from the Southern Kyrgyz oblasts and provinces. The reasons for the growing numbers of female external (temporary) migrants have not yet been fully analyzed, but research from organizations such as the IOM indicates that women often find it easier to negotiate border formalities and paperwork with the largely male border police—though often not without risk to their own safety and security.²⁸

Conditions on these plantations are notorious: working hours are long, living conditions are unsanitary, and the pay is poor (Centre of Public Opinion 2005: 8). In a small sample survey conducted for this CGA, both women and men noted that women’s earnings are significantly less

²⁶ Kyrgyz National Statistics Committee (Natstascom). Figures provided at the special request of the author.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Information obtained in an interview with IOM staff, Bishkek.

than men's, often for the same work (Centre of Public Opinion 2005: 8). Many women workers also report sexual harassment and rape by new employers or by coworkers. Living without the protection of family, kinship, and community networks increases women's vulnerability (Box 5).

Box 5. The Perils of Labor Migration

After finishing school, I left for Kazakhstan with my mother to work on the tobacco plantations. From the very beginning, an owner of the farm started harassing me. Using an excuse that he must be assisted in buying products for employees and inventory for work in the fields, he took me in his car. Now I am pregnant by him and when he learned about it he insisted that I have an abortion. He urged, threatened me, and took me to the doctor. The doctor told me that the first pregnancy cannot be interrupted because I can be childless after that. I did not agree to have an abortion and all the deadlines for that have passed. He is not going to marry me and I do not know what will happen to me when I deliver the child or where I will go with my child.

—*Young woman from the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Chilik rayon, village of Shelek*

Source: Centre of Publications 2005 and Kyrgyz Council of NGOs 2003: 18–19.

When working without legal documents, few women are willing to go to the police to report incidents (see Box 6). In August 2003, the Ombudsman of the Kyrgyz Republic received a letter signed by 1,000 Kyrgyz citizens (mainly illegal migrants) who were being held in slave-like conditions on these tobacco plantations (Kyrgyz Council of NGOs 2003: 18–19).

Box 6. Better a Hundred Friends than a Hundred Rubles? The Changing Role of Social Networks in Transition

“Better a hundred friends than a hundred rubles”: a popular Russian proverb during the Soviet era underlined the importance to the Kyrgyz of informal social networks as mechanisms for getting things done, obtaining access to “deficit” goods and services, acquiring accurate information about events and opportunities, circumventing regulations, and gaining access to elite education and health care as well as positions of power.

A recent study on the impact of the transition on these informal social networks in the Kyrgyz Republic has found that while these networks continue to be an integral part of everyday life in post-Soviet Kyrgyz society, the networks between poor and nonpoor have fragmented and the groups have become increasingly polarized. In particular, the nonpoor are becoming more reluctant to provide support to poor relatives and are moving toward interest-based networks through which they are able to access an array of resources. The frequency of their social encounters with the poor has also decreased; the poor find themselves increasingly isolated—economically, geographically and socially. Without money, which has become central to maintaining such networks, the poor find it difficult to remain a part of them. Moreover, many poor people are becoming increasingly indebted, forcing them into patron-client relationships with the nonpoor.

The change in the nature of these informal social networks is important to policy makers who are seeking to ensure that poverty reduction efforts are based on principles of ensuring inclusion, empowerment, and security for the poor. Moreover, better understanding the gender dimensions of these changing social relationships and how they are impacting upon women's roles, responsibilities, and choices can bring about the development of improved policies and programs that effectively target the needs of poor women.

Source: Adapted from Kuhenast and Dudwick 2002.

Since the mid-1990s, the IOM has been actively working with the Kyrgyz Government on issues such as border management, migration policies, legislation, labor migration, and activities to counter trafficking in human beings. The adoption of the Laws “On External Migration” (2000) and “On Internal Migration” (2002) has been a positive step forward, although the Government Migration Office remains seriously underresourced and does not focus on gender issues specifically within its program of work.

B. Trafficking

The issue of human trafficking has been the focus of increasing attention in the Kyrgyz Republic over the last several years and is recognized throughout the Central Asian region as a growing problem. According to estimates from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, as many as 200,000 persons, mainly women and girls, are trafficked annually from Eastern Europe and Central Asia to the newly independent states (NIS) countries, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and Germany (Winrock International 2004: 3). In responding to the Second Report of the Kyrgyz Republic in January 2004, the CEDAW Committee noted with concern the “serious” problem of trafficking in women in the Kyrgyz Republic and requested the Government to provide more data on trafficking in women and girls, as well as measures taken to combat the problem, in its next report to the Committee (CEDAW 2002: 5).

The Kyrgyz Republic is known as a source, transit, and destination country for victims of human trafficking and, while accurate figures are difficult to obtain, the IOM has estimated that 4,000 women were trafficked to other countries from the Kyrgyz Republic in 1999 (IOM/OSCE 2003: 10). Key destination countries include the UAE, Turkey, the PRC, and South Korea, where women are largely trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation (US Department of State 2005b). In 2004, researchers concluded that 80% of Kyrgyz women trafficked abroad for sexual exploitation ended up in the UAE (Box 7). Smaller numbers of trafficking victims transited the Kyrgyz Republic from Uzbekistan and South Asia to Russia, Turkey, and Europe. In 2004, the Kyrgyz Republic was a destination country for Uzbek women trafficked for sexual exploitation. An estimated 295,000 Kyrgyz migrant laborers work illegally in Russia, making them vulnerable to being trafficked (US Department of State 2005b).

Box 7. Vulnerability to Trafficking: a Mother’s Testimony

...After finishing the 9th year at our village school, my daughter entered one of the colleges in Bishkek. After the first semester, I could not pay for her studies and she had to look for a job. Once, near the Central Department Store, a grown woman whose name was Tamara came up to her and offered to take her to the United Arab Emirates to earn a lot of money and maybe even marry a millionaire (being so beautiful)...

—*Mother of a trafficked women, Issyk-Kul oblast, Zhety-Oguz area*

Source: Kyrgyz Council of NGOs 2003: 17.

According to official 2001 data from the Kyrgyz Consulate in the UAE, around 1,000 women were resident in the UAE, either with fake documents or without any documents at all (CEDAW 2002: 34). A 2004 “Preventing Human Trafficking” project, funded by USAID and implemented by Winrock International, found that women are usually trafficked using fraudulent recruitment processes, including advertisements in daily papers for domestic assistance and nannies that promise lucrative salaries and good working conditions. Marriage agencies are also identified as a major human trafficking channel (Winrock International 2004: 7). Many of the groups engaged in human trafficking are well established and have a sophisticated organizational structure, including extensive national, regional, and international networks (US Department of State 2004, Winrock International 2004).

A number of reports also suggest that trafficking of women, men, and children takes place within the context of the large-scale unofficial labor migration that takes place each year, particularly from the southern regions of the Kyrgyz Republic (Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken) to the industrial rayons of Russia and agricultural rayons of Kazakhstan (Winrock International, 2004: 33), for the purpose of forced labor (several witness testimonies attest to this) (Kyrgyz Council of NGOs 2003: 18). There are also reports that trafficking occurs within the Kyrgyz Republic, specifically from the poor southern areas to northern cities such as Bishkek, although no figures document the extent of the problem (Kyrgyz Council of NGOs 2003: 18). The Kyrgyz Republic is rated as a Tier 2 country by the US State Department in its 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report.²⁹

Studies from several international NGOs and development partners suggest that poverty and scarcity of employment are the primary “push” factors for victims of human trafficking. Increasing levels of unemployment among younger women over the transition period have made them particularly vulnerable to offers of employment and many agree to such offers without checking the credentials of the recruiting organization or the prospective employer. Few have any awareness of their legal rights or how to exercise them. For the few who do manage to escape, their future is bleak, because they are poor and in another country illegally. Those who do manage to return home are usually shunned by family members and society in general because of the widespread stigma associated with sex work.

In response to the increasing scale of the problem, the Kyrgyz Government improved its law enforcement efforts with the May 2004 creation of a dedicated anti-trafficking enforcement unit, formed from a unit previously established in June 2003. Authorities produced 31 indictments and 17 convictions for trafficking-related offenses, including recruitment for sexual or labor exploitation and marriage to underage persons. In 2004, the Government initiated a “National Program of Measures on Struggle with the Illegal Export and Trafficking in Humans to the Kyrgyz Republic for 2002–2005” and has established a National Council on Counter-Trafficking and Counter-Smuggling under the President. The National Action Plan focuses on prevention and enforcement activities, including wider training for law enforcement and migration authorities as well as providing counseling and reintegration assistance to returned victims.

²⁹ According to the U.S. Department of State, Tier 2 Countries are “countries whose Governments do not fully comply with the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003 minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards” (US Department of State, 2005a).

In January 2005, the government adopted a new comprehensive anti-trafficking law that prohibits all types of trafficking, with sufficiently severe penalties. The law also gives immunity from prosecution to trafficking victims who cooperate with investigators. Kyrgyz authorities have also developed anti-trafficking cooperation with counterparts in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine, PRC, Republic of Korea, and the UAE (US Department of State 2005b). The Foreign Affairs Ministry also released an information booklet for Kyrgyz citizens seeking to work abroad in former Soviet Union countries to better inform labor migrants of their rights.

Several NGOs are also working at both central and oblast level to combat trafficking. IOM has launched a public information campaign to raise awareness of the dangers and consequences of trafficking and has established two hotlines (in Bishkek and Osh) to inform people wishing to seek employment abroad about the potential risks, as well as to assist victims of trafficking. An NGO-supported capacity-building and awareness campaign is also being implemented to improve the awareness and knowledge of trafficking in human beings among different NGOs and within the community, and to promote humane treatment of victims and their reintegration into society. The IOM is also working with the General Prosecutor's Office to train lawyers on counter-trafficking legislation.

A USAID-funded assessment of NGO capacity to implement effective prevention and protection activities against human trafficking found that while many NGOs are sensitive to the issue and have been expanding the range of their activities to address the issue more effectively, a considerable number are still not fully aware of the relevant international legal instruments and national laws that provide the framework for their protective and preventive work (Winrock International 2004). It was also noted that awareness of these frameworks could be improved within the Government, particularly at oblast level. The study highlighted the need for improved coordination between the Government and NGOs and noted the strong advantage of working with NGOs in facilitating public information campaigns, particularly with the aim of increasing the level of legal literacy in both urban and rural locations.

C. (Re)Emergent Traditions and Practices

Concern is growing among women's groups in the Kyrgyz Republic about (re)emerging traditions and practices (such as polygamy) and their growing popularity, particularly within rural communities. While some of these "traditions" have been attributed to the growing influence of Islam in the Republic, it is in practice often difficult to separate these new allegedly Islamic traditions and customs from other indigenous ones. Muslim ethnic groups in the Kyrgyz Republic have a long tradition of customary law, elements of which have been influenced by Islam and by pre-Islamic ethnic Kyrgyz traditions and customs. The confluence of these means that daily life is regulated by a mixture of secular written laws, Soviet traditions and customs, Islam, and customary law. Therefore, more research on how this confluence of traditions, customs, and practices impacts upon the lives of women and men is needed before any clear attributions to a specific set of values can be made.

What is clear, however, is that with the freedoms that accompanied the dissolution of the FSU came a renewed interest in Kyrgyz cultural/ethnic identity and practices, including Islamic values and practices. During the Soviet era, many earlier customs and religious observances and practices were discouraged or outlawed, and while a number of people continued to practice these, they often did so at great personal risk to themselves and their families. Mosques, churches, and other places of religious worship were closed and religion was tightly under the control of the state. Since independence, religious practice has notably increased throughout the country and most villages now have their own mosque or church. An estimated 1,500 churches and mosques exist in the Kyrgyz Republic today compared to 33 under the Soviet Union (Giovarelli and Akmatova 2002: 2).

The reported increases in the incidence of (religious and unregistered) early marriages, polygamy, seclusion and veiling of women, and restrictions on their mobility are of real concern and need to be closely monitored. In particular, the widening of the gap between women's de jure and de facto equality needs further critical assessment, as many women, particularly in rural areas, report a decrease in the influence of official law and a parallel increase in the influence of customary laws. Of particular concern are reports of a separation of women's rights between the "public" and "private" domain, with customary law prevailing, especially within the private sphere but increasingly within the public sphere as well.

In particular, further analysis of the extent to which the range of customary institutions that exist at village level impact upon women's rights is clearly needed. These institutions include the *aiyl akmutu* (village government), village head (paid by the *aiyl akmutu*), *mahallya* (neighborhood committees) and *aksakal (sotu)* (courts of elders), and are generally responsible for a range of jurisdictions relating to village/community-level disputes (i.e., about land/property) and employ a mixture of official and customary law. The World Bank studied the impact of these institutions on women's rights in the Osh and Naryn oblasts noted that while many of these institutions allow women to participate, participation rates are in fact very low. It also noted that these women turn to these customary institutions more frequently when their membership includes a woman representative. Most grievances brought by women relate to intrahousehold issues such as domestic violence, polygamy, divorce, divorce property settlements, and alcohol and drug abuse by their husbands (Giovarelli and Akmatova 2002: 2).

The Women's Councils/Women's Congress, a legacy from the Soviet era, still exist today, although unlike the other predecessors, they are not funded from the state budget. In recognition of the need to increase the role and authority of these Councils so that they play a more active role in promoting gender equality and sensitivity to gender issues at the local level, the Secretariat of the NCWFGA, in collaboration with the NGO Agency of Social Technologies, has drafted a new model and operating procedures for these Councils and is currently providing training and other support for them.

1. Bride Theft and Polygamy

In the Kyrgyz Republic, *ala Kachuu* is understood as the act of abducting a woman for the purpose of marriage. It can take a number of forms, including violent, nonconsensual kidnapping,

or staged abduction for consensual marriage, as well as elopement. “Kidnapping” usually involves a man and his friends taking a woman by force or deception to the home of his parents or a near relative, where she is held until she is convinced to put on the marriage scarf. In some cases women are raped and then threatened with the shame of no longer being a pure woman (Kleinbach, Ablezova, and Aiteieva 2004: 2).

Owing to the often secret nature of the crime, accurate figures on the extent of bride kidnapping are difficult to obtain. In 2002, only eight crimes of coercion into marriage and four of kidnapping were officially registered, compared with 18 coerced marriages and one kidnap in 2001 and nine coerced marriages and two kidnappings in 2000 (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 91). In contrast, a 2004 survey of the extent of bride kidnapping in an ethnic Kyrgyz village by the American University of Central Asia found that of the 543 Kyrgyz respondents, 374 (80%) reported being kidnapped, 10 of them more than once. Six nonethnic kidnappings (3 Kazak, 2 Kalmyk, and 1 Uzbek) occurred, suggesting that most kidnappings are committed by ethnic Kyrgyz. The mean average age of the women at the time of the kidnapping was 20 years and that of men, 24 years. According to the respondents, only 34% of the kidnappings were conducted “with the woman’s consent,” and 46% said they were kidnapped by deception and 18% by force (Kleinbach, Ablezova, and Aiteieva 2004: 2). What is of concern is that the evidence from the 2004 study suggests that the incidence of “nonconsensual” bride kidnapping for the 16–25-year-old age group has increased from 43% in 1999, when the first survey was undertaken by the same researchers, to 75% (Kleinbach, Ablezova, and Aiteieva 2004: 6).

Government and NGO community responses to addressing the problem of nonconsensual bride kidnapping have been ad hoc and fragmented. CEDAW, at its 30th session, which reviewed the second periodic report of the Kyrgyz Republic, noted with concern the continued existence of bride abduction and urged the Government to undertake training of the judiciary and law enforcement officials as well as conducting public awareness campaigns to eliminate the practice. While bride kidnapping is prohibited under Kyrgyz law, prosecutions are rare, indicating a need to improve women’s awareness of their rights, raise public awareness of the issue, and stress that a greater focus on enforcement is required. A small number of NGOs has begun to address the issue, but to date their activities have had limited impact.

No official data exist on the extent to which polygamy is practiced in the Kyrgyz Republic today, although many NGOs report that it is not uncommon. Both the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the CEDAW Committee have noted with concern that although polygamy is illegal, it is nonetheless practiced in some regions (CEDAW 2004). During the CGA mission, many NGOs and women’s activists noted their concern with what they perceive to be the growing incidence of polygamy and the detrimental impacts it has on women and their children, many of whom are effectively abandoned when the husband takes a second (or in rarer cases a third) wife and are therefore extremely vulnerable to falling into poverty. It has also been suggested that the alarming increase in the numbers of children born to unmarried mothers—from 13% in 1990 to 32.7% in 2002 (55.5% of whom are born to mothers in the 15–19 age group)—may also in part be linked to an increase in such “unofficial” marriages, although few concrete data are available, due to the sensitivity of the issue (Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b: 26).

D. Gender and the Environment

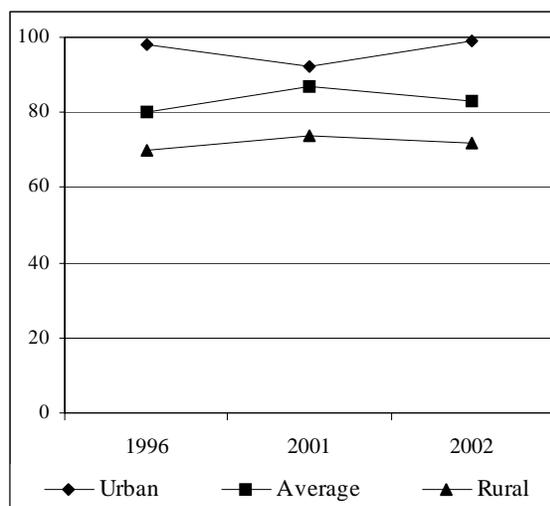
Analysis of gender and environment issues in the Kyrgyz Republic has been very limited and the connections between gender relations, environmental change, and vulnerability have yet to be studied in any detail. In particular, understanding gender differences in the provision of resources for the household (water, fuel, food); the use and management of natural resources; knowledge of the environment (and of specific environmental resources), and of environmental problems; and responsibilities for managing, owning, or stewarding resources and in the rights to those resources is important if environmental policies and programs are to be effective.

Although the Government has made considerable progress in ensuring access to safe drinking water for the urban population (Figure 9), a key problem is the lack of access to safe drinking water and adequate sewerage facilities in rural areas, where two thirds of the population live. In 2002, more than one in four rural Kyrgyz did not have access to safe drinking water and less than one in 10 had access to sewerage facilities (Figures 9 and 10). The health impacts of unsafe drinking water supplies and lack of sanitary conditions have been well documented and impose costs on both men and women through illness, associated loss of income, and the medical costs of treatment. Improving domestic water supply can also yield *economic* returns by bringing time savings for women and hence allowing them to undertake other productive activities.

Moreover, water users' groups, managed and coordinated by women, provide an entry point for other poverty reduction interventions, such as microenterprise projects that support the organization and training of women, market research, marketing, quality control, and the provision of microcredit facilities.

Land degradation is a real concern in the Kyrgyz Republic. Out of 10.6 million hectares of agricultural land, more than 88% are recognized as degraded and subject to the processes of desertification. The areas of secondary soil salinity constitute three quarters of the country's whole arable land area. The Kyrgyz Republic joined the UN Convention on Desertification (1997) and developed an Action Plan on fighting desertification. This is being supported by a number of development partners, including UNDP, USAID, Technical Assistance for the CIS, and the German Technical Cooperation Agency (United Nations 2002b: 14). Poverty is a leading cause, with farmers trying to "eke out" an existence on marginal lands with limited access to agricultural resources, often driven to adapting less labor-intensive crops and practices that could harm the environment. Soil erosion, polluted water, and declining yields are the result. Although it is clear

Figure 9. Share of the Population with Regular Access to Pure Drinking Water, 1996–2002

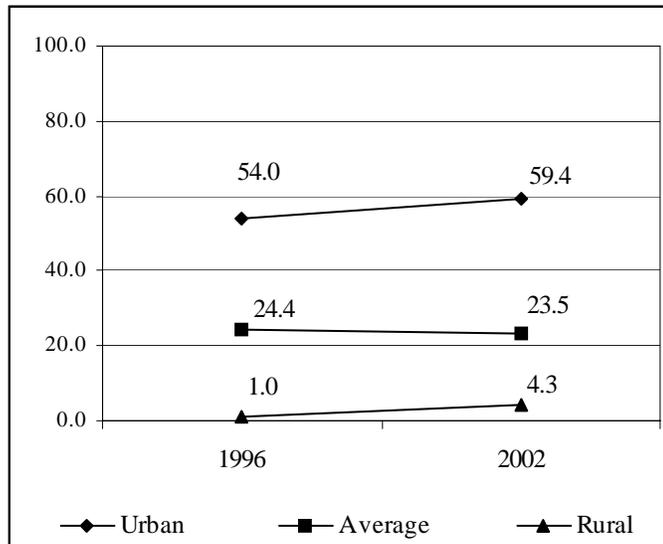


Source: Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2004a: 44.

that the land is a livelihood source for the majority of Kyrgyz women and men, further analysis is required of their respective roles in the employment of different farming methods (such as fallowing, crop rotation, intercropping, and mulching) and their techniques for promoting soil conservation, fertility and enrichment.

A key area that requires further analysis is the gender impacts of deforestation. It is estimated that the area covered by forest in the Kyrgyz Republic decreased by more than 10% between 1990 and 2001. The condition of forests is also of concern; many forests are aging faster than they are being created or replenished; since over 50% of forests are mature or overmature, they are more vulnerable to disease. Simultaneously, chopping down forest resources for firewood is widespread in rural and mountainous areas leading to a degradation of the soil and vegetation cover. To reverse these processes, it is important to better understand men's and women's respective relationships to the forest and their use of forest resources.

Figure 10. Share of Population with Access to Sewage Facilities, 1996–2002



Source: Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2004a

Chapter 8 Mainstreaming Gender into Poverty Reduction Strategies, Entry Points, and Recommendations

A. Addressing the Gender Dimensions of Poverty—Priorities and Entry Points

This CGA has noted that while the post-Soviet transition period in the Kyrgyz Republic has had serious and detrimental impacts on both women and men, women have been disproportionately affected, both absolutely and in relation to men, by growing gender disparities in political leadership, employment, wages, health care, and, increasingly, in education. In addition, the transition period has uncovered new types of female disadvantage, such as trafficking, the (re)emergence of patriarchal values and practices (such as bride kidnapping and polygamy), and health- and lifestyle-related risks including high rates of gender-based violence.

In particular, the assessment (as detailed in Chapter 2) has characterized these gender dimensions of poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic within a framework of (i) decreasing opportunities for women, (ii) the erosion of women's capabilities, (iii) increasing insecurity, and (iv) increasing disempowerment. Addressing these gender dimensions of poverty and the gender issues that characterize them at the national policy and program level is a key priority. This chapter therefore brings the analysis together by noting the key gender priorities that need to be addressed and identifying potential entry points for gender mainstreaming in the context of the current NPRS document. These are elaborated briefly below and spelled out in detail in Appendix 3. Since many of these issues are likely to persist into the short and medium term, it is anticipated that these entry points and accompanying actions could also serve as a framework for mainstreaming gender concerns in the next NPRS process and policy document.

The transition period has been marked by *decreasing opportunities for women*, including significantly lower levels of employment and persistent and protracted periods of unemployment, considerable vertical and horizontal segregation in the labor market, and the accession of few women to senior decision-making posts. Moreover, limited access to credit and support for the establishment of SMEs and increasing levels of time poverty associated with the triple burdens of child care, household labor, and paid (formal or informal) work have further constrained women's opportunities to engage in meaningful, paid employment.

Several sections of the current NPRS relate directly to but do not address these issues, including the sections on creating an effective civil service (Chapter III-7), the labor market and job creation (Chapter IV-5), and privatization, investment policy, and stimulating private investment (Chapter V-7–9). The next NPRS could more effectively respond to these gender issues by establishing the increase in women's economic opportunities as a principal objective of labor market and rural/agricultural development programs. Entry points that could be used to address these issues include programs to increase rural women's access to assets, such as livestock and equipment; inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, labor-saving technologies, and extension services and training; targeting women for employment retraining programs; ensuring that effective legislation is in place and enforced regarding discriminatory employment practices; creating fast-

track opportunities for women's promotion in the civil service; and identifying the development and implementation of employment retraining programs for women as a key policy priority. Central to each of these is the need for more analyses and surveys of the gender dimensions of the formal and informal sector, as well as women's participation rates and roles in the agricultural sector.

This assessment has also noted that *women's capabilities are also being eroded* in various ways. High maternal and child mortality rates and worrying levels of nutritional deficiency, including significant levels of maternal and childhood anemia and IDD, significantly undermine women's productive capacities and impose extra direct and indirect costs on already strained households as a result of chronic ill health. Evidence also exists of declining access to quality health care for some groups, particularly the poor, as well as increasing levels of informal costs (i.e., out-of-pocket payments for medical services). In addition, indications are of declining attendance of girls at the primary school level, increasing numbers of boys dropping out at secondary level, and a deterioration in the quality of education provided.

Although the NPRS does consider reform to the education and health sectors in some depth, gender issues are not mainstreamed in all of the subsector analyses or in the proposed policy recommendations. Appendix 3 notes a number of potential entry points for addressing these capability-related issues in the education sector, including building in regular monitoring of enrollment and attendance rates for girls and boys at primary and secondary levels and developing appropriate interventions to address gender gaps; undertaking regular assessments of learning achievements of boys and girls and programs to improve education outcomes; and expanding and improving the quality of ECD (including kindergarten) programs. In the health care sector, policy commitments to developing and implementing public awareness campaigns on nutrition as well as to achieving the internationally/nationally-set MDGs #4 (reducing child mortality), #5 (reducing maternal mortality), and #6 (combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, particularly tuberculosis) would be key entry points to addressing these issues at the national level.

This CGA has also noted that many women in the Kyrgyz Republic are experiencing *increased levels of insecurity*, including growing rates of trafficking and VAW and increasing pressures to become temporary internal/external labor migrants. This can seriously undermine women's opportunities and capabilities. The need to ensure that proposed pension reforms do not unfairly penalize women for disrupted working careers to give birth to and raise children is also a critical policy consideration.

The "Gender Equity" section of the NPRS does recognize VAW and trafficking as growing problems and makes several concrete recommendations, although these recommendations are not reflected in the "Actions Matrix" in its Appendix 5, which lists all of the actions arising from the Strategy and their associated cost implications. Ensuring that recommendations on VAW and trafficking are properly resourced should therefore be a key consideration in the next NPRS. In particular, the NPRS sections on "Raising the effectiveness of the legislature (Chapter III-2) and "Refining the Judiciary and Law Enforcement Agencies" (Chapter III-3) could provide entry points for making policy and program commitments that address VAW, trafficking, and female (as well as male) temporary labor migration issues. Similarly, the internal labor market and job creation

section of the NPRS (Chapter IV-5) could provide an entry point to outline the links between poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and trafficking.

Addressing gender issues in the pension reform process is also a key issue and could have been addressed using the sections on “Targeted Social protection” (Chapter IV-1) and the “Retirements Pension Benefits System” (Chapter IV-4) as key entry points for identifying the gender dimensions of pension reform and identifying appropriate remedial actions. The next NPRS could use similar entry points to ensure that all proposed amendments and changes to pensions/social protection systems are properly scrutinized and assessed for their gender implications and amendments made to ensure that programs do not discriminate against or disadvantage women.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, *increasing disempowerment*, particularly within political structures, has been one of the most tangible negative impacts of the transition period. Problematically, while women’s participation rates in governance structures were once considerably higher than today, this was largely a result of the imposition of quotas rather than an indicator of women’s political emancipation and equal rights. Hence, while the very low rates of today could be increased through the setting of targets, this needs to be supplemented and supported by a policy commitment to conduct national, regional, and village-level campaigns aimed at encouraging and increasing women’s participation in central and local governance structures. These entry points are noted in Appendix 4, which also recommends that a key input to such initiatives is conducting assessments of the constraints and impediments to women’s increased political engagement.

B. Addressing the Gender Dimensions of Poverty—Recommendations for Government and Development Partners

The following recommendations are focused at the government level, while it is recognized that considerable support will need to be provided by development partners to enable them to be effectively realized. Chapter 9, which follows, provides recommendations specifically for ADB, focusing on the sectors in which ADB is most active in the Kyrgyz Republic.

1. Harmonize the gender equality goals and objectives of the principal national policy instruments.

As this CGA has noted, the four key national documents that address gender and poverty issues, either comprehensively or in part, are the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) to 2010, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) (2003–2005), the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Achieving Gender Equality (2002–2006) and the National Formulation of the MDGs. A key difficulty is that each of these documents was developed at different stages of the transition process and, while they have some common elements, they also contain divergences and gaps. By far the most comprehensive document is the NPA, while the remaining documents address gender concerns either as a single subsection (CDF), a single chapter (NPRS) or in the case of the National MDG Report, only as related to MDG #3, which specifically addresses gender concerns. The result is that both policy frameworks and actions have become fragmented or work

in parallel, constraining the capacity to monitor and track progress effectively against agreed common goals and objectives, using consistent sets of indicators. Moreover, resources are not as effectively used as they might be when common objectives and goals are identified and resources clearly attributed to each of them.

It is therefore recommended that efforts be made to harmonize the key policy documents that address gender equity and gender and poverty reduction issues, with a view to ensuring that they are consistent with regard to goals, objectives, and performance indicators. While this may not be possible for a document such as the CDF, which has already been completed and has a lifespan to 2010, the process informing the forthcoming review and reformulation of the NPRS should ensure that the document (i) mainstreams gender within each of the sector areas identified for action (see recommendation 2 below); and (ii) is consistent with the NPA. In turn, the NPRS revision may afford an opportunity for the NPA to be revisited to ensure that it reflects current gender issues and priorities.

2. Ensure that the revised/new Constitution effectively promotes and guarantees gender equality.

As this CGA has noted, the Constitutional Council, which was established by the Parliament following the political events of March 2005, has a critical role to play in promoting and guaranteeing gender equality in the ongoing process of reviewing and amending the current Constitution. In this regard, the Council could benefit from the expertise of a gender expert (and/or a supporting gender review panel) to undertake a gender analysis of the current draft and make proposals and recommendations for ensuring that gender equality goals and objectives are constitutionally guaranteed. This should include, for example, ensuring that the document contains clear and concise definitions of key terms such as discrimination and gender equality. A review of the proposals made by the NCWFGA could spearhead this process.

3. Actively encourage and support women's increased participation in political processes and governance structures.

As this CGA has noted, the level of women's participation in political processes and governance structures in the Kyrgyz Republic is extremely low, and a marked decline has occurred over the transition period. It is clear that the promotion of good governance processes and structures, in which women are properly represented, will require the development and implementation of specific strategies (policies and programs) to remove the current obstacles to women's participation and actively encourage and support their increased participation at all levels (e.g., through public information/promotional campaigns, district-level training programs, and removal of electoral registration fees). Encouraging and supporting the greater involvement of women NGOs in civil society, including as members of government advisory committees and similar consultative mechanisms, is also key to increasing women's participation.

4. Mainstream gender in the next National Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The current NPRS, which is due for revision in 2005, does not reflect a gender mainstreaming approach to analyzing and diagnosing the various dimensions of poverty. As this CGA has noted, gender issues have been addressed separately within the context of a separate chapter and not routinely addressed at other strategic or sector levels, such as the sections on social protection, the labor market and job creation, access to quality health care services, or even the development of the rural sector. The development of a new NPRS therefore offers a real window of opportunity to ensure that gender is effectively mainstreamed in policy and program planning. While a requirement to consider gender issues as a separate chapter within the document may remain, this should not be at the expense of not addressing gender issues within the remainder of the document. At each and every point, from problem identification through to policy and program formulation, the gender dimensions of poverty should be identified and analyzed, and appropriate, and if necessary different, policy and program solutions considered.

5. Ensure that gender equality initiatives within the next National Poverty Reduction Strategy are properly resourced and financed.

A key difficulty with the current NPRS is that the gender equality initiatives outlined separately (in Chapter XII of the document) were not resourced. A small budget has been provided to the NCWFGA Secretariat each year for program work, specifically 300,000 soms (\$7,320) in 2002 and 400,000 soms in 2004 (\$9,760), but this has been sufficient only to implement a small number of selected programs. Mainstreaming gender throughout the NPRS should therefore also imply apportioning sufficient budget allocations at line ministry level for achieving defined program objectives.

6. Strengthen the capacity and resources of the National Council on Women, Family and Gender Affairs and its Secretariat to effectively monitor gender mainstreaming efforts at the national level.

The key responsibility of the NCWFGA Secretariat is to define the policy framework for addressing gender concerns at the national and local level and monitor the work of the government agencies with responsibility for achieving them. In addition, the Secretariat has the responsibility to provide appropriate gender training and advice to the Government at all levels to enable it to successfully implement its programs.

At present the limited number of staff in the Secretariat makes it impossible for them to meet their mandate effectively. In particular, their program of work at the oblast and rayon level could be further developed and supported with a view to ensuring that the forthcoming NPRS participative and development process addresses gender issues fully and effectively. This will require both staff and financial resources.

7. Integrate the Millennium Development Goals and develop indicators synergistic with the goals, objectives, and indicators to be identified in the National Poverty Reduction Strategy review.

As noted in the section on integrating the MDGs, further consideration needs to be given to ways to develop the remaining goals and targets and ensure that those targets are aligned with the process to develop the NPRS from 2005. The process of integrating the remaining MDGs and identifying key indicators as well as appropriate policy- and program-level entry points should be undertaken under the guidance of the NCWFGA Secretariat and with the full participation of all ministries, relevant NGOs and civil society organizations, and development partners. In addition, clear and measurable indicators need to be identified to measure progress in achieving each of the agreed national targets.

8. Continue support for and participation in the National Gender Consultative Group.

The Gender Consultative Group, which was convened by UNDP several years ago and has met intermittently, provides a forum for regular discussion of gender issues and coordination of policy and program interventions. Such a group has real value, not just for sharing experiences and lessons learned, but also for advocating and lobbying for change and ensuring that resources are used effectively. In particular, it would be useful for such a group to include NGO and civil society representatives working on gender issues at the national and regional level, who may bring to the table fresh perspectives on gender and poverty issues, as well as appropriate strategies for addressing them. Continued support for and active participation in the Group, particularly as preparations for the next NPRS are beginning, can ensure that gender issues are effectively mainstreamed in national planning processes.

9. Continue to improve and ensure the collection of gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators in all sectors.

The Kyrgyz Republic has initiated a regular Household Budget Survey (HBS), which was complemented by the Kyrgyz Integrated Household Survey in 2003. The latter represents an improved methodology and has a wider scope than the HBS and considerable efforts have been made to improve the quality and scope of sex-disaggregated data. However, while the collection of such data is improving, it is still weak and does not provide adequate information upon which to develop and implement gender-mainstreamed policies and programs. The annual publication *Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic* should therefore continue to be supported and strengthened, with a view to including more sex-disaggregated data on the employment, health care, education, and migration sectors.³⁰ Some of this data will require the completion of additional studies, assessments, and regular surveys as proposed in the next paragraph.

³⁰ In particular, more data on female rates of employment/participation in the private sector, sex-disaggregated data on retrenchments and firings, and private sector wage rates would add to and improve the existing data for this sector. In addition, sex-disaggregated data on migration patterns (by age/educational level/place of origin) would enable improved tracking of this important trend. Health care data, particularly related to MMRs and men's health care issues (including anemia/IDDs/nutrition levels) need to be strengthened for effective interventions to be developed.

10. Undertake a gap analysis of gender-related information requirements and undertake assessments/surveys to fill these gaps.

This CGA has noted significant information gaps that need to be addressed if the policy directions and programs identified in the NPRS are to be effectively targeted at priority areas of need. Moreover, such data will be critical to monitoring many of the MDGs and targets, particularly in the health care and education sector. In addition to continued improvements in the HBS, additional (and possibly regular) surveys and analyses need to be undertaken, both to verify HBS findings and to target specific areas of gender concern.³¹ Undertaking an analysis of gender information gaps and weaknesses and (possibly with some aid provider support) additional studies/surveys focused on addressing these gaps would considerably enhance and strengthen the HBS and related data.

³¹ For example, while it is well understood that the informal sector makes a significant contribution to household income in the Kyrgyz Republic, little is known about the scope of these activities (by gender), participation rates (by gender), or the income flows being generated (and their impact on household welfare). Further, very little information is available on access to capital, resources, inputs, and support services in the agricultural sector by gender. Understanding the dimensions and reasons for apparent decreases in girls' primary school enrollment rates is another key area of concern that would benefit from improved data and analyses, as are the high and growing rates of "unmarried" mothers.

Chapter 9* **Mainstreaming Gender into ADB Operations*

A. Gender in the Country Strategy and Program

The overall objective of the current ADB Country Strategy and Program (CSP) (2004–2006) and Country Strategy and Program Update (CSPU) (2005–2006) is reducing poverty by promoting private sector-led economic growth and supporting selected areas of human development. The CSP, due to be updated in 2007, is expected to retain a broad focus on the current sector priorities: (i) agriculture and rural development; (ii) the financial sector; (iii) regional cooperation, including transport and trade; and (iv) investments in basic education and ECD. It is also expected to retain its strategic focus on the thematic priorities of economic growth, human development, governance, private sector development, and environmental protection that frame these sector priorities. In this way, the strategic and sector focus of the CSP reflects the key priorities identified by the Kyrgyz Government in the CDF (to 2010) and the NPRS.

Focusing on a range of interventions across these strategic priorities, including policy dialogue, institutional development support and key investments in the targeted areas, the current portfolio comprises a mix of loans, grant-financed projects, including those funded by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR), and (project preparatory) technical assistance. The geographic focus of the CSP is on the poorer areas of the country.

Gender and development are identified as a crosscutting theme in the current CSP, which notes that the gender equality achieved under the Soviet system is gradually eroding: in particular, gender disparity in wages is increasing, as are levels of female unemployment. As this CGA has noted, other CSP sector priority areas contain real gender concerns, such as agriculture and rural development, financial sector development, transport and trade, and basic education and ECD. Mainstreaming gender in ADB's lending operations in these sectors and ongoing policy dialogue with the Government, therefore, provide a real opportunity to reduce these disparities and promote gender equality, thereby effectively contributing to the Government's poverty reduction goals.

B. General and Sector Recommendations for Gender Mainstreaming in the Country Strategy and Program

This section seeks to provide some strategic recommendations for gender mainstreaming to be considered in the forthcoming 2007 CSP. It begins by proposing some general entry points and mechanisms for mainstreaming gender in the country portfolio before identifying specific recommendations applicable to the four specific focus areas which frame the current CSP.

1. General Recommendations for Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming in the Country Program of Assistance

- Ensure that social and gender analysis informs project design; identify constraints to women's and men's full and equal participation and make recommendations to overcome those constraints as appropriate.
- Develop project gender action plans and/or gender strategies that contain clear objectives and targets linked to the project log-frame, are tracked through an effective monitoring and reporting system, and are adequately resourced (financial and human).
- Ensure that such action plans/strategies include gender capacity building support (including, for example, training in gender analysis and collection of sex-disaggregated data) for executing agencies and other project staff, so that they have the understanding and tools to achieve the project's gender-related objectives and targets.
- Ensure that sex-disaggregated baseline data inform project design, that participation strategies include women and men as managers and users, and that monitoring and evaluation are participatory and gender inclusive.
- Support gender equity in the appointment of project management staff in executing/implementing agencies and units and ensure wage parity for all men and women (ADB) project staff in the field and at project management level.
- Regularly monitor current and emerging gender gaps in all dimensions of poverty (e.g., income/nonincome) and identify and support appropriate strategies and interventions to remedy such gaps.
- Undertake regular programmatic reviews of the implementation of gender action plans and set specific time-bound targets and indicators for project adjustments and modifications.
- Institutionalize gender-disaggregated data in project implementation and management units (PIUs/PMUs) and regular collection and reporting of project data disaggregated by sex to track indicators and identify and remedy gaps as appropriate.
- Identify, support, and wherever possible work on projects with women's NGOs/CBOs or NGOs/CBOs with an active female constituency. As this CGA has noted, further strengthening (women's) NGOs/CBOs, especially in rural areas where most poor women live, is central to enhancing women's leadership and participation in governance structures. ADB projects could actively contribute to this by encouraging their participation and building their institutional capacity through project activities.
- Identify ways in which ADB operations can support government efforts to promote gender equality, particularly through strengthening and building the capacity of the NCWFGA.

2. Recommendations for Gender Mainstreaming in Sector Program Areas

a. Promoting Private Sector-Led Growth

Agriculture and Rural Development. Over 60% of the Kyrgyz population lives in rural areas and approximately 47% of rural households are classified as very poor. The agriculture and rural development sector will therefore remain a key focus of ADB's program of assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic and supports one of the principal prongs of the Government's private sector-led growth strategy. In particular, ADB has supported a range of policy and institutional reform projects aimed at land reform and natural resources management, sector restructuring, improvement of the agricultural input supply system, improved cost recovery in irrigation, provision of credit, and capacity building in key institutions. ADB has also supported investments for rehabilitating irrigation and establishment of viable credit unions in rural areas, as well as water supply and sanitation projects.

As this CGA notes, women in rural areas face their own often considerable obstacles to overcoming poverty. In particular, women have borne many of the most detrimental impacts arising from the agriculture sector reforms, including the dismantling of the supportive social infrastructure (e.g., schools, kindergartens, hospitals, child care) which characterized the former state and collective farms, as well as that losing the jobs those farms provided. Both women's employment levels and women's real wages now lag significantly behind those of men, and fewer women (13%) head farm households. Women have also emphasized that they face considerable obstacles in accessing rural assets such as equipment, inputs (e.g., seeds and fertilizers), and other resources (e.g., training and credit) that would enable them to start up their own small or medium-sized enterprises. This CGA has also noted the lack of systematic gender analysis in agricultural policy and programs and the need for further detailed analyses and data on the socioeconomic status of women in the rural sector, to better inform those policies and programs. Finally, further detailed analyses of the gender impacts of the current land reform process are required and appropriate strategies should be developed to overcome identified current and potential gender impacts.

The following list outlines some of the key policy and program entry points in the agriculture and rural development sector through which ADB can effectively gender-mainstream for gender equality.

Strengthened (project) interventions could include the following:

- Identify the needs of women farmers, gardeners, agroprocessors, etc., and develop strategies for improving the delivery of extension and other support services to these groups.
- Include targets for women's participation in farmer (or similar) groups to assist in the design and delivery of extension services.
- Ensure that efforts are made to fully involve women in rural infrastructure management committees and other management mechanisms.

- Ensure that employment opportunities, with wage parity, are provided to women in agricultural works programs, particularly in repairs and maintenance.
- Ensure gender balance in project training, exchanges, and workshops.
- Strengthen agricultural extension services for women, particularly through the provision of training, information, business advisory services, and access to agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers.
- Include targets for women’s access to extension services (e.g., training, access to agricultural inputs).
- Examine opportunities to expand rural women’s employment in light industries, such as food processing and manufacturing.
- Consult with rural women in project areas on their microcredit needs and factors discouraging them from accessing lending institutions; develop service delivery mechanisms and products that respond to these needs/constraints, utilizing and strengthening wherever possible the participation of women’s NGOs.
- Support and encourage the employment of more women agriculture and extension officers in agriculture and rural development projects.
- Closely monitor the gender impacts of the land reform process and mainstream identified gender concerns into official policy dialogue around land reform issues. Regularly monitor women’s actual versus statutory control over land resources, particularly the impact of customary law in allocation of land titles.
- Advocate the sex disaggregation of land titling databases.

b. Water Supply and Sanitation

- Set targets for women’s participation in water users’ groups to assist in the design and delivery of water supply and sanitation (WSS) projects (Box 8).

Box 8. Achieving and Integrating MDG #7/Target 10

UNDP has suggested that the Kyrgyz Republic, could “potentially” achieve MDG #7/Target 10, halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water, and has identified a lack of state resources as a major constraint. This suggests that a continued focus by ADB and other donors (notably the World Bank, which is active in the sector) on the water and sanitation sector could have a considerable positive impact and be critical to enabling the Government to achieve its MDG commitments. To be effective, such investments need to recognize the central role played by women as collectors, transporters, users, and managers of domestic water and promoters of home and community-based sanitation activities. Ensuring that gender-disaggregated baseline data inform project design, participation strategies include women and men as managers and users, monitoring and evaluation is participative and gender-inclusive, and using water and sanitation projects as entry points to other poverty reduction strategies, such as credit, are key to engendering the process of achieving MDG #7/Target 10.

Source: Author’s research.

- Ensure (and, as appropriate, set targets for) women's employment in construction/rehabilitation work, particularly in repairs and maintenance work, and ensure that wage parity is enforced.
- Closely monitor the impacts of WSS projects on women and men and ensure that project adjustments required to improve gender impact are undertaken;
- Ensure that women are equally represented in consultations on resettlement issues and that their concerns/issues are separately documented and addressed in project design and implementation.

2. Finance Sector Development and Corporate Governance and Reform

ADB has provided support for the development of the regulatory and supervisory framework and the restructuring and consolidation of the banking sector. It has also provided support to improve governance, including fiscal management; the financial sector; legal, judicial, and enterprise reform; and corporate governance. In particular, the corporate governance and reform programs (I and II) have helped to lay the foundations for private sector development in the country, through promoting competition and strengthening the environment for foreign direct investment, strengthening the legal framework for legal insolvency, promoting transparency in accounting and reporting, and strengthening corporate financial and judicial governance.

This CGA has noted that although the levels of women's entrepreneurship in the formal sector are low in the Kyrgyz Republic, women are increasingly responding to unemployment by establishing businesses in the informal sector. Complex entry and tax regulations, restrictive access to credit, and corruption have all been cited by women as key obstacles to establishing SMEs in the formal sector. This suggests that policies and programs focused on promoting private sector development would benefit considerably from analyzing and addressing the reasons for women's low levels of participation in the formal private sector. This could include, for example, developing strategic interventions designed to increase the incentives for women to shift their businesses from the informal to the formal sector, including providing technical and advisory support and services to start-up businesses; ensuring that women have equal and unhindered access to credit facilities and services; providing training, retraining, and special education programs to strengthen women's entrepreneurial skills; and supporting and promoting mechanisms to develop strong and supportive business networks. The following list identifies some of the ways in which ADB's policy and program interventions could improve women's greater participation in the formal private sector and thereby contribute to meeting ADB's poverty reduction objectives in the financial sector.

- Analyze the reasons for women's low participation in the SME sector, with a focus on identifying constraints and strategies for overcoming them.
- Analyze and document the gender dimensions of the informal sector and develop strategies in projects to encourage women's greater participation in the formal SME sector.
- Analyze proposed financial sector/governance reforms from an SME and gender perspective, identify actual/potential gender biases, and ensure that these are effectively addressed.

- Ensure that (gender-sensitive) codes of conduct for labor conditions inform and reinforce proposed reforms.
- Ensure that reforms of regulations governing SME operations are available to the public in user-friendly formats; develop and implement appropriate training materials and programs for women on these regulations.
- Seek niches with particular potential for women-led SMEs; identify barriers and strategies to overcome these with female entrepreneurs.
- Consult with women business traders/owners/vendors and others engaged in both formal and informal sector enterprises on their credit needs and the factors discouraging them from accessing lending institutions; develop service delivery mechanisms and products that respond to these needs/constraints.
- Conduct gender-awareness and sensitization training programs for staff of lending institutions in both urban and rural areas.

3. Regional Cooperation

Since 1997, ADB has been focusing on developing improved regional cooperation among the Central Asian Republics, the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, and Mongolia, with a focus on improving trade and transit links.

ADB operations in the transport sector have been concentrated in the road sector and have focused on developing an efficient policy and regulatory framework, enhancing safety standards, addressing the need for maintenance of the road network and privatization of several state-owned enterprises. In particular, ADB has extended support to the strategic Bishkek-Osh road rehabilitation project, which links the capital with the south, and the Almaty-Bishkek Road Rehabilitation Project.

Road maintenance and construction projects can and have made a real contribution to reducing poverty, particularly in countries such as the Kyrgyz Republic that are land-locked and dominated by difficult mountainous terrain with many sparsely populated areas. In addition to improving access to local/international markets and services, improved road networks can provide additional income-earning opportunities for the communities through which road corridors pass and improve access to key social infrastructure, including educational and health care facilities. At the same time, such projects can have negative impacts that have specific gender dimensions. Increased vulnerabilities to trafficking rings, labor exploitation in now accessible labor markets (e.g., tobacco plantations in Kazakhstan), and prostitution are real risks that can be mitigated if appropriate gender analysis takes place at project design and effective measures for addressing negative impacts are built into projects at implementation. The following list identifies some tools and entry points for ADB projects in this sector.

- Regularly monitor positive/negative impacts of roads projects on women and men.
- Regularly monitor other impacts of road investments on women and men, including temporary/illegal migration flows (e.g., flows of female tobacco workers traveling to Kazakhstan on a seasonal basis), trafficking, and HIV/AIDS incidence.

- Ensure that components addressing human trafficking, STIs, and HIV/AIDS are incorporated into all road projects and that such components address relevant gender issues effectively.
- Build the capacity of government officials to effectively track (female/male) migration flows and intercept human traffickers and smugglers.
- Utilize existing infrastructure in road project areas (i.e., bus depots/marketplaces) to provide information and advice to female travelers on (the dangers of) trafficking and temporary (e.g., work) migration, as well as advice to women and men about STIs and HIV/AIDS.
- Set targets for women's employment on road projects as appropriate, particularly in the areas of repairs and maintenance.
- Build HIV/AIDS and STI awareness campaigns for construction/transport workers into projects and stress the harm caused by and risks involved in using the services of commercial sex workers.
- Build in regular rapid assessments by NGOs or CBOs familiar with the region/communities around the project area to assess trafficking and (sex-disaggregated) migration flows and impacts over time.
- Ensure that wherever possible, women are fully represented on road user panels and road user committees.
- Provide opportunities (including setting quotas) for women to gain employment in rural road maintenance work and on community maintenance committees as appropriate.

4. Basic Education and Early Childhood Development

a. Basic Education

ADB has played a lead role in the basic education sector with support for policies that have encouraged private education, improved financial sustainability, and strengthened planning and management capacities. Specifically, ADB has financed the development of new curricula and textbooks, teacher education programs, and improved school facilities and equipment.

As this CGA has noted, while primary enrollment rates remain high in the Kyrgyz Republic (95–97%), concern is growing that female enrollments are decreasing at the Grade 1–4 level; the UNESCO gender parity index also reflects this trend. Concern is also growing over possible declines in attendance rates for both boys and girls at primary level and the quality of educational outcomes. Monitoring these trends and the reasons for them should be a key priority for ADB in this sector, with a particular focus on better understanding their gender dimensions. The design and implementation of projects needs to be informed by sex-disaggregated data and may need to include training of staff in executing agencies and others to ensure that they can both track changes and develop effective gender-sensitive mechanisms for addressing them. The following list identifies some proposals to strengthen ADB project interventions in this sector.

- Regularly track boys' and girls' learning achievements at primary and secondary level and develop appropriate interventions to ensure quality education for all.
- Note the trend toward a decline in female primary enrollments, utilize existing and pipeline projects to regularly track enrollment and attendance rates of boys and girls at primary school level, and use the findings to develop targeted policy and program responses that will promote the achievement of MDG #2 (Target 3).
- Undertake focused assessments within existing projects to examine the reasons for apparent declines in girls' primary enrollment and develop appropriate policy and program interventions.
- Ensure that school infrastructure and facilities adequately take into account the special needs of girls.
- Include regular assessments of girls' and boys' nonattendance rates as a core component of monitoring the effectiveness of project outcomes.
- Examine the opportunities within existing as well as pipeline projects to encourage the formation of parent/teacher associations as mechanisms for increasing the active participation of parents as (project) stakeholders, and ensure gender balance in such associations.
- Ensure that women are fully represented on school/project management committees and other project institutional arrangements.
- Build in provisions in basic education and ECD projects for reviewing existing curricula and textbooks for gender stereotypes and making changes to promote gender equity objectives.
- Ensure that curricula and textbooks developed and supported through projects promote gender equity objectives and do not contain gender stereotypes.

C. Health Care, Nutrition, and Population

The key intervention in the health care sector is a pipeline project that focuses on improving the development status of young children between birth and 8 years of age, by providing interventions aimed at improving health care, nutrition, and psychosocial development. The project will target the poorest districts, although support for the extended program of immunization will cover the needs of all eligible children in the country. In addition to the sector interventions in health care, nutrition, and education, the project focuses on building the capacity of the communities to plan, improve, and sustain child development.

This project will meet a priority need for the Kyrgyz Republic, which is characterized by very poor levels of nutrition for children in the target age group. In particular, in addition to presenting real health risks in the immediate term, high rates of wasting, stunting, anemia, and IDD seriously impact upon children's future cognitive and mental development. Available data suggest that poor nutrition affects girls and boys in different age groups differently and has strong regional variations. ADB interventions in this sector will therefore need to continue to monitor and analyze these gender/geographical trends (and their interplay) over time and ensure that project design allows for specialized interventions as required. In particular, good nutrition needs to be understood in the context of the family and the intrahousehold distribution of food and other

resources; and improvements made in both male and female nutrition practices and in the awareness central to training-related project interventions. Following are some proposals for ADB operations in this sector.

- Regularly collect and report project data disaggregated by sex to track health indicators for girls and boys and identify and remedy gender gaps as appropriate. In particular, conduct sex-disaggregated tracking within different age groups of nutritional deficiencies such as anemia, IDD, stunting, wasting, and malnutrition.
- Encourage community support for child development interventions, ensuring that women are equitably represented on community management/implementation committees and groups and as community-level organizers/trainers.
- Hire and train female health specialists.
- Seek to work with and build the capacity of women's NGOs in the project region and develop partnerships between these NGOs, target communities, and local government to work collaboratively on (child) health care, nutrition, and education projects;
- Utilize existing projects to develop an improved understanding of whether access to sanitation and clean water differs by sex and if so what the implications are for women's and men's health.
- Utilize the existing projects in ECD and nutrition to develop an improved understanding of the allocation of intrahousehold resources between women and men and boys and girls, accounting also for regional, ethnic, religious, and income differences. Such an analysis, for example of food distribution within the household, would provide an improved understanding of health differentials and enable more targeted and effective interventions in ADB ECD projects.

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Appendix 1.

Gender and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy

Ref. No.	Chapter Title	No mention of gender issues	Brief mention of gender issues	Gender issues treated with some elaboration
Chapter I	THE SCALE OF POVERTY		X	
Chapter II	SUSTAINABLE STABILIZATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT			
2.1	Expand National Potential through NPRS	X		
Chapter III	FORMATION OF AN EFFECTIVE STATE			
3.1	Democratic Institutions		X (1 line)	
3.2	Raising the Effectiveness of the Legislature	X		
3.3	Refining the Judiciary and Law Enforcement Agencies	X		
3.4	Reforming Central and Public Administration	X		
3.5	Decentralization and Local Government	X		
3.6	Reforming State Financial Management	X		
3.7	Creating an Effective Civil Service		X (1 line)	
3.8	Electronic Government	X		
Chapter IV	BUILDING A FAIR SOCIETY			
4.1	Targeted Social Protection	X		
4.2	Integration of the Disabled into Society	X		
4.3	Poverty among Children	X		
4.4	The Retirement Pension Benefits System	X		
4.5	The Labor Market and Job Creation	X		
4.6	Reform of Wages and Labor Agreements	X		
4.7	Access to Quality Education	X		
4.8	Science	X		
4.9	Culture	X		
4.10	Access to Quality Health Care Services	X		
4.11	Physical Culture and Sports	X		
4.12	Gender Equity			X
4.13	Rational Environmental Management	X		

Ref. No.	Chapter Title	No mention of gender issues	Brief mention of gender issues	Gender issues treated with some elaboration
Chapter V	PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH			
5.1	Macroeconomic Situation	X		
5.2	Economic Policy	X		
5.3	Budget Policy and the Public Investment Program	X		
5.4	Tax and Customs Policy	X		
5.5	Management of External Debt	X		
5.6	Development of Financial System	X		
5.7	Privatization	X		
5.8	Investment Policy	X		
5.9	Stimulating Private Enterprise	X		
5.10	Corporate Governance	X		
5.11	Foreign Eco Relations and Exports	X		
5.12	Development of Real Sector of Economy	X		
Chapter VI	REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	X		
Chapter VII	SECURITY OF DEVELOPMENT	X		
Chapter VIII	PARTNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN IMPLEMENTATION OF NPRS	X		
Chapter IX	RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS OF NPRS	X		
Chapter X	SUPPORT BY INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY	X		
Chapter XI	MONITORING AND EVALUATION	X		

Source: Author's research.

Appendix 2.

Gender and the Comprehensive Development Framework

CDF Objectives/Priorities	No mention of gender issues	Brief mention of gender issues	Gender issues treated with some elaboration
Effective and Transparent Administration of the State			
Improve the Effectiveness of legislative activities; legal reform.	X		
Improve judicial and legal implementation and law enforcement institutions.	X		
Improve the Executive Branch.	X		
Build a professional, efficient, and accountable civil service.	X		
Build democratic institutions.	X		
A Fair Society Providing Human Development and Protection			
Reduce poverty.	X		
Reduce Unemployment and create jobs.		X	
Develop a targeted, effective system of social protection.	X		
Improve the quality of and access to education.		X	
Develop scientific capacity to promote culture.	X		
Improve access to health care.		X	
Develop a Gender Policy.			X
Ensuring national security.	X		
Sustainable Economic Growth			
Ensure macroeconomic stability and GDP growth.	X		
Develop an effective monetary policy.	X		
Manage fiscal policy and public debt effectively.	X		
Conduct an effective foreign economic policy.	X		
Manage investment policy and the public investment program.	X		
Oversee property rights and operation of markets.	X		
Create an effective financial system.	X		
Create an effective real estate sector.	X		
Develop SMEs.	X		
Develop regions, towns, and villages.	X		

CDF = Comprehensive Development Framework; GDP = gross domestic product; SME = small and medium-sized enterprise.

Source: Authors' research.

Appendix 3.

The Gender Dimensions of Poverty—Potential Entry Points within the NPRS

Relevant NPRS Chapter	Potential Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming	Inputs (Studies/Training/Key Actions Required)
Decreasing opportunities for women		
<p>Creating an Effective Civil Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place legislation on equal employment opportunity (EEO), sexual harassment, and discriminatory employment practices and establish effective commissions or other institutions to promote and enforce equal opportunities. • Make policy commitments to creating fast-track opportunities for women’s promotion in the civil service. • Set targets for appointment of women at middle/senior management level in both central and municipal government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical advice and capacity building assistance for the development of EEO and related legislation. • Increase awareness of EEO legislation within government (central and municipal) through provision of training, particularly to middle and senior level managers. • Provide professional/management development programs targeted at female employees in central/municipal government structures.
<p>The Labor Market and Job Creation (Chapter IV-5) and Reform of Wages & Labor Agreements (Chapter IV-6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make policy commitment and develop a strategy action plan to remove structural and legal barriers as well as stereotypical attitudes to gender equality at work, addressing gender bias in recruitment, working conditions, occupational segregation, discrimination in social protection benefits, women’s occupational health and safety, and unequal career opportunities. • Develop guidelines and circulars for local governance reforms that incorporate gender dimensions. • As a key policy priority, implement employment retraining programs that take into account demand for skills and are specifically targeted at unemployed women. • Enforce existing legislation on discriminatory practices in the labor market and make sure that accessible and effective mechanisms are in place for redress. • Expand child care and ECD programs. • Ensure that staff in relevant state institutions and employment officers receive gender-sensitive training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake further studies of the (formal and informal) labor market to better understand gender-based distortions, including male/female inactivity rates. • Undertake gender assessments of the scale of temporary and illegal labor migration and the time/income and other impacts. • Undertake comprehensive employer surveys to determine labor market needs and develop appropriate vocational and other training programs for women and men. • Implement training programs for employers in the private sector, Chambers of Commerce, and their employees on EEO legislation and penalties for discriminatory workplace practices.

Relevant NPRS Chapter	Potential Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming	Inputs (Studies/Training/Key Actions Required)
Economic Policy (Chapter V-2) Budget Policy and the Public Investment program (Chapter V-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that employment schemes involving public works offer opportunities equitably to women. • Recognize in economic policy statements the implications of unpaid work in social reproduction, including the time devoted to caring for the family and community members, to the sick; to collecting fuel and water; to cooking, cleaning and teaching children. • In economic policy statements, explicitly identify and fund strategies for increasing and enhancing women’s participation in the formal employment sector. • In agricultural policy statements, explicitly identify and fund strategies for enhancing women’s participation, productivity, and access to resources, inputs, support services and market outlets, and clarify that the term “farmer” refers to both men/women producers. • Ensure that economic growth sectors provide clearly defined opportunities to women, even if this requires training for women in nontraditional skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the policies that underlie budget appropriations to identify their likely impact on men and women and analyze whether the policies are likely to reduce, increase, or leave unchanged the degree and pattern of gender differences. • Collect information on how household members utilize their time through household time-use data surveys disaggregated by gender (and age), with a view to revealing connections between the government’s budget and household time budgets. • Undertake gender-aware policy appraisal to identify implicit and explicit gender issues, allied resource allocations; and assess whether the policy will continue or change existing inequalities between men and women (and groups of men and women) and patterns of gender relations. • Undertake studies on the gender impact of existing macro- and micro-agricultural policies (including structural adjustment policies), particularly on women farmers from landless, marginal, small and female-headed households, and redesign policies in cases where adverse impacts on women are identified.
Privatization, Investment Policy and Stimulating Private Investment (Chapter V -7, 8, and 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target business training programs and support services to women (especially through groups/ associations that can provide other services) to increase women’s participation in the SME sector. • Increase women’s access to finance, including the microfinance and wider banking sector, through expansion of business advisory and support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the reasons for women’s low participation in the SME sector with a focus on identifying constraints and strategies for overcoming them. • Consult with women business traders/owners /vendors and others engaged in both formal and nonformal sector enterprises on their credit

Relevant NPRS Chapter	Potential Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming	Inputs (Studies/Training/Key Actions Required)
	<p>targeted to women, improving gender sensitivity of lending institutions, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that employment equity and sexual harassment considerations are brought into the reform process. 	<p>needs and factors discouraging them from accessing lending institutions; develop service delivery mechanisms and products that respond to these needs/constraints.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting gender-awareness and sensitization training programs for staff of lending institutions in both urban and rural areas.
Rural and Regional Development (Chapter V-12 and Chapter VI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase women’s formal role in the rural sector by increasing access to assets like livestock and equipment; inputs like seeds and fertilizers; labor-saving technologies; services like transport and facilities, and extension services and training. • Simplify lending processes so that rural women can effectively make use of credit facilities; promote agricultural credit programs that lead to new areas of productive activity for women, e.g., agrobased processing and marketing of produce. • In agricultural policy statements, explicitly mention strategies for enhancing women’s participation, productivity, and access to resources, inputs, support services and market outlets, and clarify that the term “farmer” refers to both men and women producers. • Set targets for women’s participation in the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of all the programs and projects of the Ministry of Agriculture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide targeted skills development training for women in agro-business entrepreneurship and extension support services, including market outlets. • Undertake closer monitoring of the gender impacts of the land reform process, including women’s actual versus statutory control over land resources. • Ensure that all land titling databases are gender-disaggregated. • Ensure that women receive copies of land titles and that both women and men are registered as heads of household. • Undertake studies on the gender impact of existing macro- and microagricultural policies (including structural adjustment policies), particularly on women farmers from landless, marginal, small, and female-headed households, and redesign policies in cases where adverse impacts on women are identified.
Erosion of Capacities		
Access to Quality Education (Chapter IV-7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a commitment to increasing expenditures for primary/secondary education (as a % of GDP) over the next NPRS period. • Set targets for achieving parity in primary education enrollment rates for girls and boys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake studies (in all regions) to assess reasons for decrease in primary enrollments for girls and develop appropriate policy and program interventions. • Undertake regular assessments of the learning

Relevant NPRS Chapter	Potential Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming	Inputs (Studies/Training/Key Actions Required)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institute a system for regularly monitoring boys’ and girls’ enrollment and attendance rates and feeding recommendations into policy and program interventions. • Commit additional finances to early childhood care facilities including preschools and training of preschool staff. • Introduce gender awareness training in teacher training programs. • Revise school curricula and textbooks to remove stereotyped images of the roles of men and women and to promote behavior that does not validate or condone gender inequality and gender-specific violence. • Make policy commitments to institutionalizing the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data at all levels of the education system, to track education indicators and identify and remedy gender gaps as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achievements of boys and girls and develop appropriate policy responses. • Regularly analyze labor force requirements (including gender barriers) to enable vocational and other higher education programs to better correspond to labor market demands. • Develop institutional capacity (e.g., through regular training) for collection, analysis, and reporting of gender-disaggregated data in schools and at all levels of central and municipal government responsible for education policy and programs.
Access to Quality Health Care Services (Chapter IV-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a commitment to increasing expenditures for healthcare (as a % of GDP) over the next NPRS period. • Develop and implement public awareness programs on nutrition, with a particular focus on the poor, including poor women and children. • Increase access to maternal health care services using the MDG #5 targets as the framework. • Reduce child mortality using MDG #4 targets as the framework. • Support complete childhood immunization against serious communicable diseases, setting appropriate (MDG-linked) targets over the NPRS period. • Put in place programs , including information campaigns in different languages and targeted at different groups, to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases (particularly tuberculosis) using MDG #6 targets as the framework. • Implement programs for women/men at high risk of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake gender assessments of all proposed health-care reforms to ensure that they will not impose extra work/care burdens on women. • Undertake regular (male/female) beneficiary assessments of health care services to inform policy and program improvements. • Undertake regular surveys of maternal and child mortality rates to complement existing administrative data. • Undertake assessments of childhood immunization coverage for girls and boys in all regions and among all income groups (including IDP/R’s) identifying key constraints and issues. • Undertake an assessment to identify “high-risk” groups of women and men and develop as a basis for appropriate policy and program responses.

Relevant NPRS Chapter	Potential Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming	Inputs (Studies/Training/Key Actions Required)
	<p>STIs (including sex workers, trafficked persons, spouses of migrant workers, and migrant workers themselves) and develop appropriate education and information programs, referral and treatment services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalize the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data at all levels of the health care system to track health care indicators and identify and remedy gender gaps as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop institutional capacity (e.g., through regular training) for collection, analysis, and reporting of gender-disaggregated data at all levels of central and municipal government responsible for health services.
Increasing Insecurity		
Targeted Social Protection (Chapter IV-1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake gender analysis and reviews of current and proposed pension reforms to ensure that pension programs do not discriminate against or disadvantage women. • Undertake gender analysis and reviews of current and proposed social protection programs to ensure that they do not discriminate against or disadvantage women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all proposed reforms or proposals for social protection programs are based on a thorough gender analysis, take into account the different needs of men and women, and ensure that they do not discriminate against or disadvantage women (e.g. pension reforms). • In the context of both social protection policy and program development, identify particularly vulnerable groups (poor female heads of households, single parents) and ensure that adequate social safety nets are in place to protect these groups.
Raising the Effectiveness of the Legislature (Chapter III-2); and Refining the Judiciary and Law Enforcement Agencies (Chapter III-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund and support a national awareness campaign (i.e., through schools, universities, government workplaces) on VAW. • Provide more safe houses and support (counseling) services to victims of violence. • Implement training programs for judicial, legal, medical, social, educational, police, and migration staff and border guards in order to avoid the abuse of power leading to violence against women and sensitize such personnel to the nature of gender-based violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a national assessment of extent of VAW in different regions and the level of current support services provided with a view to identifying gaps and needs. • Develop appropriate training programs. • Develop and support legal literacy training programs for women and men at different levels including within institutions at central and local government level, security forces including the police, armed forces and migration staff, border guards, educational institutions, and among rural and urban women.

Relevant NPRS Chapter	Potential Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming	Inputs (Studies/Training/Key Actions Required)
Increasing Disempowerment		
Democratic Institutions (Chapter II-1), Decentralization and Local Self-Government (Chapter III-5) and Creating and Effective Civil Service (Chapter III-7- see above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set targets for women’s participation in local government decision making. • Eliminate the mandatory Som30,000 registration charges for women political candidates. • Set targets for female representation at the oblast and rayon level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake an assessment of the constraints and impediments to women’s greater participation in local and national government political structures and make appropriate policy and program recommendations. • Implement gender-awareness and analysis training for all local government officials. • Develop regular mechanisms, at the local, regional, and national level, for consultations with civil society representatives and NGOs/CBOs and ensure that women are fully represented at those consultations.

CBP = community-based organization; ECD = early childhood development; EEO = equal employment opportunity; GDP = gross domestic product; HIV/AIDS = human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome; IDP/R = internally displaced person/refugee; MDG = Millennium Development Goal; NGO = nongovernment organization; NPRS = National Poverty Reduction Strategy; SME = small and medium-sized enterprises; STI = sexually transmitted infection; VAW = violence against women.

Source: Author’s research.

Appendix 4.

Nongovernment Organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic Working on Gender Issues

Name of NGO	Area of Activity	Contact Details
Bishkek		
Association of Crisis Centers	Provides emergency and short-term assistance to victims of violence including emergency shelter. Conducts information/awareness campaigns on VAW.	Tilebaeva Mairam 667098 mairam@users.kyrnet.kg
Association of Independent Scientists	Gender and the law/gender analysis and review of legislation.	Sydykova Leila 291843 jurface@users.kyrnet.kg
Association of NGOs and NCOs	Assistance/ information to rural/regional NGOs. Undertakes civil society gender education and awareness programs; supports and promotes women's participation in political processes.	Umetalieva Toktoiyim 66 10 44/58 61 32/ 39 04 66 (0 502) 20 13 23
Bishkek Women's Center	Provides information and assistance on gender issues to rural/regional NGOs including advice and support for establishment of NGOs.	Aitbaeva Gulnara 284685
Center for Gender Research	Undertakes research on gender issues.	Janyl Abdyldabek Kyzy 61 09 71 ajanyl@mail.ru
Center of Population	Undertakes research on gender and population issues.	Kumskova Nailya 43 04 71/43 12 79 kumskova_nailya@hotmail.kg kumskova_nailia@KRSU.edu.kg
Center of Public Opinions and Forecasting Study	Undertakes research on gender issues.	Elvira Elibezoava 658537
Congress of Kyrgyzstan Women	Provides support (information/training) for women entrepreneurs/small business owners.	Zamira Akbagysheva 664213/ 661352
Crisis Center Sezim	Provides emergency and short-term assistance to victims of violence including emergency shelter. Conducts information/awareness campaigns on VAW.	Ryskulova Bubusara 51-26-40/(0502) 387724 sezim@freenet.kg
Crisis Center Chance	Provides emergency and short-term assistance to victims of violence including emergency shelter. Conducts information/awareness campaigns on VAW.	Eliferenko Alexandra 298658 chance-cc@mail.ru

Name of NGO	Area of Activity	Contact Details
El Agartuu	Civil society gender education and awareness programs on gender and youth issues.	Tulegabylova Nurjan 21 55 52/ (0 502) 35 32 49
Federation of Women	Assistance/support to rural/regional NGOs.	Jamal Tashibekova 662491
Forum of Women's NGOs	Civil society gender education and awareness programs; supports and promotes women's participation in political processes.	Janaeva Nurgul 214585
Institute of Equal Rights and Opportunities	Research on range of gender issues. Undertaken Has undertaken gender analysis of legislation and continues to work on gender and legal issues.	Karasaeva Altnai 68 0129
Institute of Regional Researches	Undertakes research on gender issues.	Alisheva Atyrkul 28 17 71 ifrs@elcat.kg
International Association «Diamond»	Research (including legal analysis), awareness raising, and lobbying work to prevent VAW. Published Publishes considerable material on VAW issues.	Gugelbaeva Bermet 68 00 24/29 00 27 diamond@infotel.kg
International Public Fund "Pangea" "For Peace without Violence"	Civil society gender education and awareness programs; supports and promotes women's participation in political processes.	Barakanova Saltanat 21-24-38 bsn@elcat.kg/ saltanat@wid.elcat.kg
"Meerim" Fund	Provides assistance in credit/loans for rural women; information and training on establishment of small businesses.	Musabekova Mairam 66 48 81/66 51 93 gfm@transfer.kg
NGO "Kyrgyz Nur"	Reproductive health issues.	Turusbekova Gulsara 620998
Social Technologies Agency	Women and politics; supports and promotes women's participation in political processes.	Kocherbaeva Zulfia 610297 kas-kg@elcat.kg
Women Entrepreneurship Support Association	Provides information and assistance to women entrepreneurs; research into issues related to women entrepreneurial activities; undertaken analysis of gender impacts of land reform.	Berdibaeva Kaken 58 52 09/ 65 69 67 wesa@transfer.kg
Women's Aid Center	Civil society gender education and awareness programs; supports and promotes women's participation in political processes, including as candidates in elections.	Aitmatova Rosetta 54 83 90/ 546614/54 83 roza@users.kyrnet.kg
Women's Committee	Provision of micro-credit to women.	Shatkul Kudabaeva 624253/ 622077
Chui Oblast		
Alga	Civil society gender education and awareness programs; supports and	Janaeva Olga Issyk-Ata region

Name of NGO	Area of Activity	Contact Details
	promotes women's participation in political processes; VAW.	
Public Association "Chinek"	Civil society gender education and awareness programs; supports and promotes women's participation in political processes.	Dushenova, Gulnara (03132) 30415/34190 e-mail: chinek@mail.ru
Osh Oblast		
Alga	Civil society gender education and awareness programs; supports and promotes women's participation in political processes; VAW.	Eshtaeva Nargiza (3222) 5-56-08
Public Association "Chinek"	VAW/ undertakes civil society gender education and awareness programs.	Abdyldaeva Oktomkan (03234) 26033,26131 ene-naz@ktnet.kg
Jalal-Abad Oblast		
Kaniet	VAW/ undertakes civil society gender education and awareness programs.	Saralaeva Jeanne (3722) 55084
Batken Oblast		
Akyl-Karachach	VAW/ undertakes civil society gender education and awareness programs.	Mambetova Toktokan (3622) 22027,36370 kalybek2003@mail.ru
Issyk-Kul Oblast		
Altynai	VAW/ undertakes civil society gender education and awareness programs.	Ainabekova Jyrgal (03943) 44137,42850,43204 altynai1951@mail.ru
Naryn Oblast		
Tendesh	VAW/ undertakes civil society gender education and awareness programs.	Sayakbaeva Sveta
Soopker	Civil society gender education and awareness programs including improving gender awareness in/of mass media.	Kaken Barkyjokova
Talas Oblast		
Maana	VAW/ undertakes civil society gender education and awareness programs.	Tantabaeva Lira

Appendix 5.

Selected Multilateral, Bilateral, and International Nongovernment Organization Activities Supporting Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic

Multilateral Organization/Programs	Gender-Related Activities
World Bank	In 2004, undertook an assessment “Women’s Condition in the Kyrgyz Republic” (Draft). No targeted gender programs or projects, although gender issues are routinely considered in projects and programs. IFC invested US\$1 million into FINCA Kyrgyzstan, the leading microfinance provider in the Kyrgyz Republic, to expand access to microloans for low-income entrepreneurs, who are mostly women. Supported, through a regional HIV/AIDS initiative, programs in HIV/AIDS and STI prevention. In 2004, conducted jointly with NCWFGA a seminar on gender-disaggregated statistics.
UNIFEM	A key supporter of gender-related activities in the Kyrgyz Republic supporting a range of activities in conjunction with the NCWFGA and various NGOs. Focusing in particular on the gender impacts of the land reform process and supported a local NGO, WESA in Phase 1 of the project to undertake research and awareness raising programs on women’s rights to land as well as a gender analysis of current land reform legislation. Also working with the NCWFGA on engendering the MDG process and defining clear national targets for MDG #3. Have commenced a Gender Budgeting project at the Oblast level. Also supporting projects on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. Supported women’s peace building efforts in the Fergana Valley.
UNDP	Facilitated organization of quarterly coordination meetings of aid providers working in the area of gender issues until mid-2004; provided technical assistance to the Secretariat of the NCWFGA in the process of formulation, development, and implementation of the new National Action Plan for Gender Equality and meeting CEDAW commitments and reporting requirements. Supports a Gender Component (launched in 2001) as a constituent part of the UNDP Social Governance Programme in Kyrgyz Republic, a successor to the earlier UNDP Gender in Development Bureau projects—Promoting Women in Leadership (March 1999–May 2000) and Gender Mainstreaming into National Policies and Programmes (July 2000–August 2001). Published and supported the development of a “Gender Expertise manual of the Legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic” and undertook three mini-surveys on gender aspects of (i) poverty, (ii) national governance, and (iii) local governance. Has also provided ongoing funding and technical support for the annual publication <i>Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic: Compendium of Gender Disaggregated Statistics</i> .

Multilateral Organization/Programs	Gender-Related Activities
UNICEF	Supports range of interventions aimed at improving child/mother nutrition, particularly combating micronutrient deficiencies. Immunization activities, which form an integral part of the early childhood activities, focus on fostering the financial sustainability of the Government to procure vaccines and deliver high-quality service. Undertaken communication campaigns on IDD's targeted at Government, the industry and consumers and (with ADB support) undertaken a project in flour fortification to address iron deficiency anemia. In addition, supports programs on promoting HIV/AIDS awareness and behavior change among youth. Undertook a national child protection study in 2001. Support for the NGO Young Lawyers of Kyrgyzstan to conduct a mapping exercise of the juvenile justice system to identify provisions that hamper the protection of child rights, and work with the Police Academy to support and conduct training for police officers on child rights and juvenile justice underlined by gender analysis.
UNFPA	For the 2005–2009 program period, UNFPA's program includes two components: reproductive health and population and development strategies. The reproductive health component focuses on improving reproductive health services at the primary level, including activities to prevent sexual and mother-to-child HIV transmission. At the primary health-care level, the program will build capacity in reproductive health service delivery. In the population and development strategies component, the program will support capacity-building in data collection, analysis, dissemination, and utilization at the provincial level and will strengthen national expertise in applied demography. The program will also support research studies and the development of a population policy. Has provided technical and other assistance to the Secretariat of NCWFGA.
WHO	Undertaking a range of programs: integrated maternal and child health including reproductive health, TB, HIV/AIDS in prisons, public health including communicable disease surveillance (EPI, parasitic diseases, malaria, hospital-acquired infections); as well as support for health information systems, health financing and development of human resources in the health system including nursing staff.
IOM	Work has focused on migration and trafficking issues including collection of gender-disaggregated data. With support from OSCE/ODIHR jointly funded research project into "Trafficking in Women and Children in the Kyrgyz Republic" which estimated the incidence and potential for trafficking of women to, through, or from the Kyrgyz Republic. Both counter-trafficking and labor migration programs have strong gender focus, including development of gender-sensitive legislation in these key areas.
OSCE	Focus on counter-trafficking projects, including support for IOM studies on gender dimensions of trafficking to, through and from the Kyrgyz Republic. Supports development projects for women entrepreneurs, particularly in rural areas. Supported projects aimed to increase levels of women's political participation in the Republic.

Multilateral Organization/Programs	Gender-Related Activities
USAID	Gender is a cross-cutting issue in USAID programs in the Kyrgyz Republic, which focus on economic reform (including promoting small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development through business advisory services, accounting training, and business and economics education, support to microfinance institutions, and economic policy reform); health care and population (increasing the quality of primary care; training of health care professionals in the implementation of the DOTS approach to tuberculosis treatment and control of other infectious diseases; training in better prenatal care) basic education (training and resource development for 11 pilot schools); democracy and media; and conflict mitigation. Also provided support grants to NGOs to conduct information campaigns on preventing VAW as well as funding support for research into the issue of bride theft.
SIDA	Supported a joint project with UNDP/Central Election Committee “Gender in Politics in the Kyrgyz Republic” aimed at strengthening women leaders' capacity to more actively participate in municipal elections in 2004 and parliamentary elections in 2005; includes training in leadership, political campaigning techniques, creating a political image, and developing social partnerships, as well as training for journalists and the creation of information network.
SOROS Foundation	Has a separate “Women’s Program” undertaking projects on: violence prevention (including working with law-enforcement bodies and crisis centers, providing training and institutional support); gender education in schools, including curriculum development and gender training summer camps for researchers and university teachers and provision of gender-related materials to universities and libraries; research on the issue of polygamy; and promoting gender-sensitive constitutional reform and increasing women’s political participation at all levels. In cooperation with women’s and other organizations, drafted and successfully lobbied for the adoption of the law “on social and legal protection against violence in the family.”
Winrock International	Supporting a 2-year project (since 2003) to prevent human trafficking in Kyrgyz Republic with USAID support. The project focuses on strengthening the capacity of local NGOs to conduct public outreach and provide relevant training on legitimate alternatives to offers of work abroad; and protect victims of human trafficking through development of appropriate victim assistance services such as crisis centers.

ADB – Asian Development Bank; CEDAW = [United Nations] Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; DOTS = directly observed treatment short course (for tuberculosis); EPI = Expanded Program on Immunization; HIV/AIDS = human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome; IDD = iodine deficiency disease; IFC = International Finance Corporation; IOM = International Organization for Migration; MDG = Millennium Development Goal; NCWFGA = National Council on Women, Family and Gender Affairs; NGO = nongovernment organization; ODIHR = Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; STI = sexually transmitted infections; WESA = Women Entrepreneurs Support Association.

Source: CGA team research.